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SOAP **PERFECTION**

NO HERO

By E. W. Hornung

Author of "The Amateur Cracksman," "Raffles," "My Lord Duke," "Peccavi," "The Shadow of a Man," "Irralle's Bushranger," Etc.

"And I,—what I seem to my friend, you see:
What I soon shall seem to his love, you guess:
What I seem to myself, do you ask of me?
No hero, I confess."

I.

HAS no writer ever dealt with the dramatic aspect of the unopened envelope? I cannot recall such a passage in any of my authors, and yet to my mind there is much matter for philosophy in what is always the expressionless shell of a boundless possibility. Your friend may run after you in the street, and you know at a glance whether his news is to be good, bad, or indifferent; but in his handwriting on the breakfast table there is never a hint as to the nature of his communication. Whether he has sustained a loss or an addition to his family, whether he wants you to dine with him at the club or to lend him ten pounds, his handwriting at least will be the same, unless, indeed, he be offended, when he will generally indite your name with a studious precision and a distinct grace quite foreign to his ordinary caligraphy.

These reflections, trite enough, as I know, are nevertheless inevitable, if one is to begin one's heroic story in the modern manner, at the latest possible point. That is clearly the point at which a waiter brought me the fatal letter from Catherine Evers. Apart even from its immoderate consequences, the letter had a *prima-facie* interest, of no ordinary kind, as the first for years from a once constant correspondent. And so I sat studying the envelope with a curiosity

too piquant not to be enjoyed. What in the world could so obsolete a friend find to say to one now?

Catherine's handwriting was still stimulating—if, indeed, I ever found it more so in the foolish past. It had not altered in the least. There was the same sweet pedantry of the Attic *c*, the same superiority to the most venial abbreviation, the same inconsistent forest of exclamatory notes, thick as poplars across the Channel. The present plantation started after my own Christian name, to wit, "Dear Duncan!" Yet there was nothing Germanic in Catherine's ancestry. It was only her apologetic little way of addressing me, as though nothing had ever happened, of asking whether she might. Her own tact and charm were in the tentative burial of the past. In the first line she had all but won my entire forgiveness; but the very next interfered with the effect.

"You promised to do anything for me!"

I should be sorry to deny it, I am sure, for not to this day do I know what I did say on the occasion to which she evidently referred. But was it kind to break the silence of years with such a reference? Was it even quite decent in Catherine to ignore my existence until I could be of use to her, and then to ask the favor in her first breath? It was true, as she went on to remind me, that we were more or less connected, after all, and at least conceivable that no one else could help her as I

could, if I would. In any case, it was a certain satisfaction to hear that Catherine herself was of the last opinion. I read on. She was in a difficulty, but she did not say what the difficulty was. For one unworthy moment the thought of money entered my mind, to be ejected the next, as the Catherine of old came more and more into the mental focus. Pride was the last thing in which I had found her wanting, and her letter indicated no change in that respect.

"You may wonder," she wrote just at the end, "why I have never sent you a single word of inquiry, or sympathy, or congratulation! Well—suppose it was a quarrel when you went away! Mind, I never meant to quarrel, but, suppose I did, could I treat the dear old you like that, and the Great New You like somebody else? You have your own fame to thank for my unkindness! I am only thankful they haven't given you the V. C.! Then, I should *never* have dared—even now!"

Catherine wrote from the old address in Elm Park Gardens, and she wanted me to call as early as I could, or to make any appointment I liked. I, therefore, telegraphed that I was coming at three o'clock that afternoon, and thus made for myself one of the longest mornings that I can remember spending in town. I was staying at the time at the Kensington Palace Hotel, to be out of the central racket of things, and yet more or less under the eye of the surgeon, who still hoped to extract the last bullet in time. I can remember spending half the morning gazing aimlessly over the grand old trees, already prematurely bronzed, and the other half in limping in their shadow to the Round Pond, where a few little town-ridden boys were sailing their humble craft. It was near the middle of August, and for the first time I was thankful that an earlier migration had not been feasible in my case.

Mrs. Evers was not at home when I arrived, despite my telegram, but she had left a message which more than explained matters. She was lunching out, but only in Brechin Place, and I was to wait in the study, if I did not mind. I

did not, and yet I did, for the room in which Catherine certainly read her books and wrote her letters was also the scene of that which I was beginning to find it rather hard work to forget. Nor had it changed any more than her handwriting, or than the woman herself, as I confidently expected to find her now. I have often thought that on either side of forty both sexes halt mercifully to the eye, and I did not expect Catherine Evers, who could barely have reached that Rubicon, to show much symptom of the later marches. To me, here in her den, the other year was just the other day. My time in India was little better than a dream to me, while, as for angry shots at either end of Africa, it was never I who had been there to hear them. I must have come by my sticks in some less romantic fashion. Nothing could convince me that I had ever been many days or miles away from a room that I knew by heart, and found full, as I left it, of familiar trifles and poignant associations.

That was the shelf devoted to her poets; there was no addition that I could see. Over it hung the fine photograph of Watts' "Hope," an ironic emblem, and elsewhere one of that intolerably sad picture, his "Paolo and Francesca." How I remembered the wet Sunday she took me to see the original in Melbury Road. The old piano, which was never touched, the one which had been in St. Helena with Napoleon, there it stood, to an inch where it had stood of old, a sort of grand stand for the photographs of Catherine's friends. I desecrated my own young effigy among the rest, in a frame I remembered giving her at the time. Well, I looked all the idiot I must have been; and there was the very Persian rug that I had knelt on in my idiocy! I could afford to smile at myself to-day, yet now it all seemed yesterday, not even the day before, until, of a sudden, I caught sight of that other photograph in the place of honor on the mantelpiece. It was of a tall youth in flannels, armed with a long-handled racket, and the sweet, open countenance which Rob Evers had worn from his cradle upward. I should have known

him anywhere, and at any age. It was the same dear, honest face; but to think that this giant was little Bob! He had not gone to Eton when I saw him last; now I knew, from the sporting papers, that he was up at Cambridge; but it was left to his photograph to bring home the flight of time. Certainly his mother would never have done so, when, all at once, the door opened, and she stood before me, looking about thirty in the ample shadow of a cavalier's hat. Simply but admirably gowned, as I knew she would be, her slender figure looked more youthful still, yet in all this there was no intent; the dry, cool smile was that of an older woman, and I was prepared for greater cordiality than I could honestly detect in the greeting of the small, firm hand. But it was kind, as, indeed, her whole reception of me was, only it had always been the way of Catherine the correspondent to make one expect something more than mere kindness, and of Catherine the companion to disappoint that expectation. Her conversation required few exclamatory points.

"Still halt and lame," she murmured, over my sticks. "You poor thing, you are to sit down this instant."

And I obeyed her, as I always had, merely remarking that I was getting along famously now.

"You must have had an awful time," continued Catherine, seating herself near me, her calm, wise eyes on mine.

"Blood-poisoning," said I. "It nearly knocked me out, but I'm glad to say it didn't quite."

Indeed, I had never felt quite so glad before.

"Ah, that was too hard and cruel; but I was thinking of the day itself," explained Catherine, and paused in some sweet, transparent awe of one who had been through it.

"It was a beastly day," said I, forgetting her objection to the epithet until it was out. But Catherine did not wince. Her fixed eyes were full of thought.

"It was all that here," she said. "One depressing morning I had a telegram from Bob, 'Spion Kop taken.'"

"So Bob," I nodded, "had it as badly as everybody else!"

"Worse," declared Catherine, her eyes hardening. "It was all I could do to keep him at Cambridge, though he had only just gone up. He would have given up everything and flown to the front, if I had let him."

And she wore the inexorable face with which I could picture her standing in his way; and in Catherine I could admire that dogged look and all it stood for, because a great passion is always admirable. The passion of Catherine's life was her boy, the only son of his mother, and she a widow. It had been so when he was quite small. I remembered it, with a pinch of jealousy, starting as a twinge from an old wound. More than ever must it be so now; that was as natural as the maternal embargo in which Catherine seemed almost to glory. And yet, I reflected, if all the widows had thought only of their only sons—and of themselves!

"The most depressing morning!" continued Catherine, happily oblivious of what was passing through my mind. "The first thing I saw, the first time I put my nose outside, was a great pink placard, with 'Spion Kop Abandoned!' Duncan, it was too awful!"

"I wish we'd sat tight," I said, "I must confess."

"Tight!" cried Catherine, in dry horror. "I should have abandoned it long before! I should have run away! To think that you didn't—that's quite enough for me."

And again I sustained the full flattery of that speechless awe which was yet unembarrassing by reason of its freedom from undue solemnity.

"There were some of us who hadn't a leg to run on," I had to say. "I was one, Mrs. Evers."

"I beg your pardon?"

"Catherine, then."

But it put me to the blush.

"Thank you. If you really wish me to call you 'Captain Clephane,' you have only to say so; but, in that case, I can't ask the favor I had made up my mind to ask—of so old a friend."

Her most winning voice was as good a servant as ever; the touch of scorn in it was enough to stimulate, but not to sting; and it was the same with the sudden light in the steady, intellectual eyes. "Catherine," I said, "you can't, indeed, ask any favor of me! There, you are quite right. It is not a word to use between us."

She gave me one of her deliberate looks before replying.

"And I am not so sure that it is a favor," she said, softly enough, at last. "It is really your advice I want to ask—in the first place, at all events. Duncan, it's about old Bob!"

The corners of her mouth twitched, her eyes filled with a quaint, humorous concern, and, as a preamble, she handed me the photograph which I had already studied on my own account.

"Isn't he a dear?" asked Bob's mother. "Would you have known him, Duncan?"

"I did know him," said I; "spotted him at a glance. He's the same old Bob all over."

I was fortunate enough to meet the swift glance I got for that, for, in sheer sweetness and affection, it outdid all remembered glances of the past. In a moment it was as if I had more than regained the lost ground of lost years. And in another moment, on the heels of the discovery, came the still more startling one that I was glad to have regained my ground, was thankful to be reinstated, and strangely, acutely, yet uneasily, happy, as I had never been since the very old days in this very room.

Half in a dream, I heard Catherine telling of her boy, of his Eton triumphs, and yet as simple and unaffected and unspoiled with it all as the small boy I remembered. And I did remember him, and knew his mother well enough to believe it all; for she did not sing his praises to organ music, but rather hummed them to the banjo, and one felt that her own demure humor, so signal and so permanent a charm in Catherine, would have been the saving of half a dozen Bobs.

"And yet," she wound up at her start-

ing-point, "it's about poor old Bob I want to speak to you!"

"Not in a fix, I hope?"

"I hope not, Duncan."

Catherine was serious now.

"Or mischief?"

"That depends on what you mean by mischief."

Catherine was more serious still.

"Well, there are several brands, but only one or two that really poison—unless, of course, a man is very poor."

And my mind harked back to its first suspicion—of some financial embarrassment, now conceivable enough; but Catherine told me her boy was not poor, with the air of one who would have drunk ditch-water rather than let the other want for champagne.

"It is just the opposite," she added; "in little more than a year, when he comes of age, he will have quite as much as is good for him. You know what he is, or, rather, you don't. I do; and, if I were not his mother, I should fall in love with him myself!"

Catherine looked down on me, as she returned from replacing Bob's photograph on the mantelpiece. The humor had gone out of her eye; in its place was an almost animal glitter, a far harder light than had accompanied the significant reference to the patriotic impulse which she had nipped in the bud. It was probably only the old, old look of the lioness whose whelp is threatened, but it was something new to me in Catherine Evers, something half repellent, and yet almost wholly fine.

"You don't mean to say it's that?" I asked, aghast.

"No, I don't," Catherine answered, with a hard little laugh. "He's not quite twenty, remember, but I am afraid that he is making a fool of himself, and I want it stopped."

I was wise enough to wait for more, and merely nodded my sympathetic concern.

"Poor old Bob, as you may suppose, is not a genius. He is far too nice," declared Catherine's old self, "to be anything so nasty. But I always thought he had his head screwed on, and his heart screwed in, or I never would have

let him loose in a Swiss hotel. As it was, I was only too glad for him to go with George Kennerley, who was as good at work at Eton as Bob was at games.

"They were to read together for an hour or two every day. I thought it would be a nice little change for Bob, and it was quite a chance. He must do a certain amount of work, you see. Well, they only went at the beginning of the month, and already they have had enough of each other's society."

"You don't mean to say they've quarreled?"

Catherine inclined a mortified head.

"Bob never did such a thing in his life before, nor did I ever know anybody who succeeded in quarreling with Bob. It does take two, you know. And, when one of the two has an angelic temper, and tact enough for twenty——"

"You naturally blame the other," I put in, as she paused, in visible perplexity.

"But I don't, Duncan, and that's just the point. George is devoted to Bob, and is as nice as he can be himself, in his own sober, honest, plodding way. He may not have the temper—he certainly has not the tact—but he loves Bob, and has come back quite miserable."

"Then he has come back, and you have seen him?"

"He was here last night. You must know that Bob writes to me every day, even from Cambridge, if it's only a line, and in yesterday's letter he mentioned, quite casually, that George had had enough of it, and was off home. It was a little too casual to be quite natural in old Bob, and there are other things he has been mentioning in the same way. If any instinct is to be relied on, it is a mother's, and mine amounted almost to second sight. I sent Master George a telegram, and he came in last night."

"Well?"

"Not a word! There had been a row; that was all I could get out of him. A vulgar row between Bob, of all people, and his greatest friend! If you could have seen the poor fellow sitting where you are sitting now, like a prisoner in the dock! I put him in the wit-

ness-box instead, and examined him on scraps of Bob's letters to me. It was as unscrupulous as you please; but I felt unscrupulous; and the poor dear was too loyal to admit, yet too honest to deny a single thing."

"And——" said I, as Bob's mother paused again.

"And," cried she, with conscious melodrama in the fiery twinkle of her eye, "and I know all! There is an odious creature at the hotel—a widow, if you please! A 'rippin' widow' Bob called her in his first letter; then it was 'Mrs. Lascelles,' but now it is only 'some people' whom he escorts here, there, and everywhere. *Some people, indeed!*"

Catherine smiled, unmercifully. I relied on my nod.

"I needn't tell you," she went on, "that the creature is at least twenty years older than my baby, and not at all nice, at that. George didn't tell me, mind; but he couldn't deny a single thing. It was about her that they fell out. Poor George remonstrated, not too diplomatically, I dare say, but I can quite see that my Bob behaved as he was never known to behave on land or sea. The poor child has been bewitched—that's what he's been!"

"He'll get over it," I murmured, with the somewhat shaky confidence born of my own experience.

Catherine looked at me in mild surprise.

"But it's going on now, Duncan—it's going on still!"

"Well," I added, with all the comfort my voice could carry, "well, Catherine, it can't go very far at his age!" Nor to this hour can I conceive a sounder saying, in all the circumstances of the case, and with one's knowledge of the type of lad; but my fate was the common one of comforters, and I was made speedily and painfully aware that I had now, indeed, said the most unfortunate thing.

Catherine did not stamp her foot, but she did everything else required by tradition of the exasperated female. Not go far? As if it had not gone too far already to be tolerated for another instant longer!

"He is making a fool of himself—my boy—my Bob—before a whole hotelful of sharp eyes and sharper tongues! Is that not far enough for it to have gone? Duncan, it must be stopped, and stopped at once. But I am not the one to do it. I would rather it went on!" cried Catherine, tragically, as though the pit yawned before us all; "than that his mother should fly to his rescue before all the world! But a friend might do it, Duncan—if——"

Her voice dropped. I bent my ear.

"If only," she sighed, "I had a friend that would!"

Catherine was still looking down when I looked up; but the droop of the slender body, the humble angle of the picture hat, the faint flush underneath, all formed together a challenge and an appeal, which were the more irresistible for their sweet shamefacedness. Acute consciousness of the past, I thought, and, I even fancied, some penitence for a wrong by no means past undoing, were in every sensitive inch of her, as she sat a suppliant to the old player of that part.

My hand shook, as I reached for my trusty sticks, but I cannot say that my voice betrayed me when I inquired the name of the Swiss hotel.

"The Riffel Alp," said Catherine; "above Zermatt, you know."

"I start to-morrow morning," I rejoined, "if that will do."

Then Catherine looked up. I cannot describe her look. Transfiguration were the idle word, but the inadequate, and yet more than one would scatter the effect of so sudden a burst of human sunlight.

"Would you really go?" she cried. "Do you mean it, Duncan?"

"I only wish," I replied, "that it were to Australia."

"But, then, you would be weeks too late."

"Ah, that's another story! I may be too late as it is."

Her brightness clouded on the instant, only a gleam of annoyance pierced the cloud.

"Too late for what, may I ask?"

"Everything, except stopping the bans."

"Please don't talk nonsense, Duncan. Bans at nineteen!"

"It is nonsense, I agree; at the same time, the minor consequences will be the hardest to deal with. If they are being talked about, well, they are being talked about. You know Bob better than I. Suppose he is making a fool of himself, is he the sort of fellow to stop because I tell him so? I should say not, from what I know of him, and of you."

"I don't know," argued Catherine, looking pleased with her compliment. "You used to have quite an influence over him, if you remember."

"I can just remember it; but then he was a small boy, and now he is a grown man."

"But you are a much older one."

"Too old to trust to mere age."

"And you have been wounded in the war!"

"That hotel is probably full of wounded men; if not, I may get a little unworthy purchase there. In any case, I'll go. I should have to go somewhere before many days. It may as well be to that place as to another. I have heard that the air is glorious; and I'll keep an eye on Robin, if I can't do anything else."

"That's enough for me," cried Catherine, warmly. "I have sufficient faith in you to leave all the rest to your own discretion and good sense and better heart. And I never shall forget it, Duncan; never, never! You are the one person he wouldn't instantly suspect as an emissary, besides being the only one I ever—ever trusted well enough to—to take at your word, as I have done."

I thought myself that the sentence might have taken a different turn without untruth or necessary complications. Perhaps my conceit was on a scale with my acknowledged infirmity where Catherine was concerned. But I did think that there was more than trust in the eyes that now melted into mine; there was liking, at least, and gratitude enough to determine me to win infinitely more. I went so far as to take in mine the hand to which I had dared to aspire

in the temerity of my youth; nor shall I pretend for a moment that the old aspirations had not already mounted to their old seat in my brain. On the contrary, I was only wondering whether the honesty of voicing my hopes would nowise counterbalance the caddishness of the sort of stipulation I had in mind.

"All I ask," I was saying to myself, "is that you will give me another chance, and take me seriously this time, if I prove myself worthy in the way you want."

But I am thankful to think I had not said it to Catherine when tea came up, and saved a dangerous situation.

I stayed another hour, at least, and there are few in my memory which passed more deliciously. In writing of it now, I feel that I have made too little of Catherine Evers, in my anxiety not to make too much, yet am about to leave her to stand or to fall in the reader's opinion, by such impression as I have already succeeded in creating in his or her mind. Let me add one word, or two, while yet I may. A baron's daughter, (though you might have known Catherine some time without knowing that), she had, nevertheless, married for mere love, as a very young girl, and been left a widow before the birth of her boy. I never knew her husband, though we were distant kin, nor yet herself during the long years through which she mourned him. She was beginning to recover her interest in the world when first we met, but she never returned to that identical fold of society in which she had been born and bred. It was, of course, despite her own performance, a fold to which the worldly wolf was no stranger; and her trouble had turned a light-hearted little lady into an eager, intellectual, speculative being, with a sort of shame for her former estate, and an undoubted reactionary dislike of all dominion and petty pomp. Of her own high folk, one neither saw nor heard a thing; her friends were the powerful preachers of most denominations, and one or two that only painted or wrote; for she had been greatly exercised about religion, and somewhat solaced by the arts.

Of her charm for me, a lad with a sneaking regard for the pen, even when I buckled on the sword, I need not be too analytical. No doubt about her kindly interest, in the first instance, in so morbid a curiosity as a subaltern that cared for books and was prepared to extend his gracious patronage to pictures also. This subaltern had only too much money, and, if the truth be known, only too little honest interest in the career into which he had allowed himself to drift. An early stage of that career brought him up to London, and family pressure drove him on a day to Elm Park Gardens. The rest is easily conceived. Here was a woman, still young, though some years older than one's self; attractive, intellectual, amusing, the soul of sympathy, at once a spiritual influence, and the best companion in the world; and once, at least, she had taken a perhaps imprudent interest in a lad whom she interested on so many and various accounts. Must you marvel that the young fool mistook the interest on both sides for a more intense feeling, of which he, at least, had no experience at the time, and that he fell by his mistake at a ridiculously early stage of his career?

It is, I grant, more surprising to find the same young man playing Harry Esmond (at due distance) to the same Lady Castlewood after years in India and a taste of two wars. But Catherine's room was Catherine's room, a very haunt of the higher sirens, charged with noble promptings and forgotten influences and impossible vows. And you will please bear in mind that, as yet, I am only setting forth, from this rarefied atmosphere, upon my invidious mission,

II.

It is a far cry to Zermatt at the best of times, and that is not the middle of August. The annual rush was at its height, the trains crowded, the heat of them overpowering. I chose to sit up all night in my corner of an ordinary compartment, as a lesser evil than the *wagon-lit*, in which you cannot sit up at

all. In the morning one was in Switzerland, with a black collar, a rusty chin, and a countenance in keeping with its appointments. It was not as if the night had been beguiled for me by such considerations as are only proper to the devout pilgrim in his lady's service.

On the contrary, I found it quite impossible to sustain such a serious view of the very special service to which I was foresworn; the more I thought of it, in one sense, the less in another, until my only chance was to go forward with grim humor in the spirit of impersonal curiosity which that attitude begets. In a word, and the cant one which yet happens to express my state of mind to a nicety, I had already "weakened" on the whole business that I had been in such a foolish hurry to undertake, though not for a moment upon her for whom I had undertaken it. I was still entirely eager to do her behest, in pleasure or in pain. But this particular enterprise I was beginning to view apart from its inspiration in its intrinsic demerits, and, the more clearly I saw it in its own light, the less pleasure did the prospect afford me.

A young giant, whom I had not seen since his childhood, was merely understood to be carrying on a conspicuous, but in all probability a most innocent, flirtation in a Swiss hotel; and here was I, on mere second-hand hearsay, crossing half Europe to spoil his perfectly legitimate sport! I did not examine my project from the unknown lady's point of view; it made me quite hot enough to consider it from that of my own sex. Yet, the day before yesterday, I had more than acquiesced in the dubious plan—had even volunteered for its achievement. The train rattled out one long, maddening tune to my own incessant marvelings at my own secret apostasy; the stuffy compartment was not Catherine's sanctum of the quickening memorials and the olden spell. Catherine herself was no longer before me, in the vivacious flesh, with her half-playful pathos of word and look, her fascinating outward light and shade, her deeper and steadier intellectual glow. Those, I suppose, were the charms which had undone me, first as well as

last; but the memory of them was no solace in the train. Nor was I tempted to dream again of ultimate reward. I could see now no further than my immediate part; a more distasteful mixture of the mean and of the ludicrous I hope never to rehearse again.

One mitigation I might have set against the rest. Dining at the Rag the night before I left, I met a man that knew a man then staying at the Riffel Alp. My man was a sapper with whom I had had a very slight acquaintance out in India, but he happened to be one of those good-natured creatures that never hesitate to bestir themselves or their friends to oblige a mere acquaintance. He asked if I had secured rooms, and, on learning that I had not, insisted on telegraphing to his friend to do his best for me. I had not hitherto appreciated the popularity of a resort which I happened only to know by name, nor did I even on getting at Lausanne a telegram to say that a room was duly reserved for me. It was only when I actually arrived, tired out with travel, toward the second evening, and when half of those who had come up with me were sent down again to Zermatt for their pains, that I felt as grateful as I ought to have been from the beginning. Here, upon a mere ledge of the high Alps, was a hotel, with tier upon tier of windows winking in the setting sun. On every hand were dazzling peaks piled against a turquoise sky, yet drawn respectfully apart from the incomparable Matterhorn, that proud, grim chieftain of them all.

My unknown friend at court, one Quinby, a civilian, came up and spoke before I had been five minutes at my destination. He was a very tall and extraordinarily thin man, with an ill-nourished, red mustache, and an easy geniality of a somewhat acid sort. He had a trick of laughing softly through his nose, and my two sticks served to excite a sense of humor as odd as its habitual expression.

"I'm glad you carry the outward signs," said he, "for I made the most of your wounds, and you really owe your room to them. You see, we're a very

representative crowd. That festive old boy strutting up and down, with his cigar, in the Panama hat, is really best known in the black cap; it's old Sankey, the hanging judge. The big man, with his back turned, you will know in a moment when he looks this way. It's the celebrated actor, Belgrave Teale. He comes down in one or other of his parts every day; to-day it's the genial squire, yesterday it was the haw-haw officer of the Crimean school. But a real, live officer from the front we don't happen to have had, much less a wounded one, and you limp straight into the breach."

I should have resented these pleasant-ries from an ordinary stranger, but this libertine might be held to have earned his charter, and, moreover, I had further use for him. We were loitering on the steps between the glass veranda and the terrace at the back of the hotel. The little, sunlit stage was full of vivid, trivial, transitory life. It seemed as a foil to the vast eternal scene. The hanging judge still strutted, with his cigar, peering jocosely from under the broad brim of his Panama; the great actor still posed aloof, the human Matterhorn of the group. I descried no showy woman with a tall youth dancing attendance; among the brick-red English faces, there was not one that bore the least resemblance to the latest photograph of Bob Evers.

A little consideration suggested my first move.

"I think I saw a visitors' book in the hall," I said. "I may as well write down my name."

But, before doing so, I ran my eye up and down the pages inscribed by those who had arrived that month.

"See anybody you know?" inquired Quinby, who hovered obligingly at my elbow. It was really necessary to be as disingenuous as possible, more especially with a person whose own conversation was evidently quite unguarded.

"Yes, by Jove, I do! Robin Evers, of all people!"

"Do you know him?"

The question came very quickly. I was sorry I had said so much.

"Well, I once knew a small boy of

that name; but, then, they are not a small clan."

"His mother's the Honorable," said Quinby, with studious unconcern, yet I fancied with increased interest in me.

"I used to see something of them both," I deliberately admitted, "when the lad was little. How has he turned out?"

Quinby gave his peculiar nasal laugh.

"A nice youth," said he. "A very nice youth!"

"Do you mean nice or nasty?" I asked, inclined to bridle at his tone.

"Oh, anything but nasty," said Quinby. "Only—well—perhaps a bit rapid for his years!"

I stooped and put my name in the book before making any further remark. Then I handed Quinby my cigarette-case, and we sat down on the nearest lounge.

"Rapid, is he?" said I. "That's quite interesting. And how does it take him?"

"Oh, not in any way that's discreditable; but, as a matter of fact, there's a gay, young widow here, and they're fairly going it!"

I lit my cigarette, with a certain unexpected sense of downright satisfaction. So there was something in it, after all! It had seemed such a fool's errand in the train.

"A young widow," I repeated, emphasizing one of Quinby's epithets and ignoring the other.

"I mean, of course, she's a good deal older than Evers."

"And her name?"

"A Mrs. Lascelles."

I nodded.

"Do you happen to know anything about her?"

"Not that I can say. No more does anybody else, Captain Clephane, except that she's an Indian widow of sorts."

"Indian!" I repeated, with more interest.

Quinby looked at me.

"You've been out there yourself, perhaps?"

"It was there I knew Hamilton," I said, naming our common friend in the Engineers.

"Yet you're sure you never came across Mrs. Lascelles there?"

"India's a large place," I said, smiling, as I shook my head.

"I wonder if Hamilton did?" speculated Quinby, aloud.

"And the Lascelles," I added, "are another large clan."

"Well," he went on, after a moment's further cogitation, "there's nobody here can place this particular Mrs. Lascelles, but there are some say things they can tell you for themselves. I'm not going to repeat them, if you know anything about the boy. I only wish you knew him well enough to give him a friendly word of advice."

"Is it so bad as all that?"

"My dear sir, I don't say there's anything bad about it," returned Quinby, who seemed to possess a pretty gift of suggestive negation; "but you may hear another opinion from other people, for you will find that the whole hotel is talking about it. No," he went on, watching my eyes, "it's no use looking for them at this time of day; they disappear from morning to night; if you want to see them, you must take a stroll when everybody else is thinking of turning in. Then you may have better luck. But here are the letters, at last."

The concierge had appeared, hugging an overflowing armful of postal matter. In another minute there was hardly standing room in the little hall.

As I dressed in my small, low room, at the top of the house, with its sloping ceiling of varnished wood, I felt that, after all, I had learned nothing really new respecting my disturbing young gentleman. Quinby had already proved himself such an arrant gossip as to discount every word that he had said before I placed him in his proper type. It is one which I have encountered elsewhere, that of the middle-aged bachelor who will and must talk, and he had confessed his celibacy almost in his first breath; but a more pronounced specimen of the type I am in no hurry to meet again.

I was somewhat late for dinner, but the scandalous couple were later still,

and all the evening I saw nothing of them. That, however, was greatly due to that fellow Quinby, whose determined offices one could hardly disdain after once accepting favors at his hand. In the press, after dinner, I saw his ferret's face peering this way and that, a good head higher than any other, and the moment our eyes met, he began elbowing his way toward me. Only an ingrate would have turned and fled; and for the next hour or two I suffered Quinby to exploit my wounds and me for a good deal more than our intrinsic value. To do the man justice, however, I had no fault to find with the very pleasant little circle into which he insisted on ushering me, at one end of the glazed veranda, and should have enjoyed my evening, but for an inquisitive anxiety to get in touch with the unsuspecting pair. Meanwhile, the lilt of a waltz had mingled with the click of billiard balls and the talking and laughing, which alone make night vocal in that outpost of pleasure on the silent heights. Some of our party had gone off to dance. In the end I followed them, sticks and all; but there was no Bob Evers among the dancers, nor in the billiard-room, nor anywhere else indoors.

Then, last of all, I looked where Quinby had advised me to look, and there, sure enough, on the almost deserted terrace, were the couple whom I had come several hundred miles to put asunder. Hitherto, I had only realized the distasteful character of my task. Now, at a glance, I had my first inkling of its difficulty.

There was no moon, but the mountain stars were the brightest I have ever seen in Europe. The mountains themselves stood back, as it were, darkling and unobtrusive; all that was left of the Matterhorn was a towering gap in the stars; and in the faint, cold light stood my friends somewhat close together, and I thought I saw the red tips of two cigarettes. There was, at least, no mistaking the long, loose limbs in the light overcoat. And, because a woman always looks relatively taller than a man, this woman looked almost as tall as this lad.

"Bob Evers? You may not remember me, but my name's Clephane—Duncan, you know!"

I felt the veriest scoundrel, and yet the words came out as smoothly as I have written them, as if to show me that I had been a potential scoundrel all my life.

"Duncan Clephane? Why, of course, I remember you. I should think I did! I say, though, you must have had a shocking time!"

Bob's voice was quite quiet for all his astonishment, his manner a miracle, though it was too dark to read the face. And his hand held tenderly to mine, as his eyes fell upon my sticks, while his left poised a steady cigarette; and now I saw that there was only one red tip, after all.

"I read your name in the visitors' book," said I, feeling too big a brute to acknowledge the boy's solicitude for me. "I—I felt certain it must be you."

"How splendid!" cried the great fellow, in his easy, soft, unconscious voice. "By the way, may I introduce you to Mrs. Lascelles? Captain Clephane's one of our very oldest friends, just back from the front, and precious nearly blown to bits!"

III.

Mrs. Lascelles and I exchanged our bows. For a dangerous woman, there was a rather striking want of study in her attire. Over her rain-coat, the night being chilly, she had put on her golf cape as well, and the effect was a little heterogeneous. It also argued qualities other than those for which I was, naturally, on the watch. Of the lady's face, I could see even less than of Bob's, for the hood of the cape was turned up, like a monk's cowl. But, while I peered, she let me hear her voice, and a very rich one it was, almost deep in tone, the voice of a woman that would sing contralto.

"Have you really been fighting?" she asked, in a way that was either put on, or else the expression of a more under-

standing sympathy than one usually provoked; for pity and admiration, and even a helpless woman's envy, might all have been discovered by an ear less critical and more charitable than mine.

"Like anything!" answered Bob, in his unaffected speech.

"Until they knocked me out," I felt bound to add, "and that, unfortunately, was before very long."

"You must have been dreadfully wounded!" said Mrs. Lascelles, raising her eyes from my sticks and gazing at me, I fancy, with some intentness; but, at her expression, I could only guess.

"Bowled over on Spion Kop," said Bob, "and fairly riddled as he lay."

"But only about the legs, Mrs. Lascelles," I explained; "and, you see, I didn't lose either, so I've no cause to complain."

"Were you up there the whole of that awful day?" asked Mrs. Lascelles, almost in a whisper.

"I had to be," said I, trying to lighten the subject with a laugh. But Bob's tone was little better.

"So he went staggering about among his men," he must needs chime in, with other superfluities, "for I remember reading all about it in the papers, and boasting like anything about having known you, but feeling simply green with envy of you all the time. I say, you'll be a tremendous hero up here, you know! I'm awfully glad you've come. It's quite funny, all the same. I suppose you came here to get your strength back? He couldn't have found a better place, could he, Mrs. Lascelles?"

"Indeed, he could not. I only wish we could empty the hotel, and fill every bed with our poor wounded!"

I do not know why I should have felt so much surprised. I had made unto myself my own image of Mrs. Lascelles, and neither her appearance nor a single word that had fallen from her was in the least in keeping with my conception. Prepared for a certain type of woman, I was quite confounded by its unconventional embodiment, and inclined to believe that this was not the type at all. I ought to have known life better. The most scheming mind may well entertain

an enthusiasm for arms, genuine enough in itself, at a martial crisis, and a natural manner is by no means incompatible with the baser vices. That manner and that enthusiasm were absolutely all that I, as yet, knew in favor of this Mrs. Lascelles. But they were enough to cause me irritation. I wished to be honest with somebody, let me at least be honestly inimical to her. I took out my cigarette-case, and, when about to help myself, handed it, with a vile pretense at impulse, to Mrs. Lascelles instead.

Mrs. Lascelles thanked me, but declined.

"Don't you smoke?" I asked, blandly. "Sometimes."

"Ah! Then I wasn't mistaken. I thought I saw two cigarettes just now."

Indeed, I had first smelt and afterward discovered the second cigarette smouldering on the ground. Bob was smoking his still. The chances were that they had both been lighted at the same time. Therefore, the other had been thrown away, unfinished, at my approach. And that was one more variation from the type of my confident preconceptions.

Young Robin had, meanwhile, had a quick eye on us both, and the stump of his own cigarette was glowing between a firmer pair of lips than I had looked for in that boyish face.

"It's so funny," said he (but there was no fun in his voice), "the prejudice some people have against women smoking. Why shouldn't they? Where's the harm?"

Now, there is no new plea to be advanced on either side of this eternal question, nor is it one upon which I ever felt strongly, but just then I felt tempted to speak as though I did. I will not now dissect my motive, but it was vaguely connected with my mission, and not unrighteous from that standpoint. I said it was not a question of harm at all, but of what one admired in a woman and what one did not; a man loved to look upon a woman as something above and beyond him, and there could be no doubt that the gap seemed a little less when both were smoking like twin funnels. That, I thought, was the adverse

point of view. I did not say that it was mine.

"I'm glad to hear it," said Bob Evers, with the faintest coldness in his tone, though I fancied he was fuming within, and admired both his chivalry and his self-control. "To me it's quite funny. I call it sheer selfishness. We enjoy a cigarette ourselves; why shouldn't they? We don't force them to be teetotal, do we? Is it bad form for a woman to drink a glass of wine? You mightn't bicycle once, might you, Mrs. Lascelles? I dare say Captain Clephane doesn't approve of that yet!"

"That's hitting below the belt," said I, laughing. "I wasn't giving you my opinion, but only the old-fashioned view of the matter. I wish you'd take one, Mrs. Lascelles, or I shall think I've been misunderstood all round!"

"No, thank you, Captain Clephane. That old-fashioned feeling is infectious."

"Then I will," cried Bob, "to show there's no ill-feeling. You old fire-eater, I believe you put up the argument just to change the conversation. Wouldn't you like a chair for those game legs?"

"No, I've got to use them in moderation. I was going to have a stroll, when I spotted you at last."

"Then, we'll all take one together," cried the genial old Bob once more. "It's a bit cold standing here, don't you think, Mrs. Lascelles? After you with the match!"

But I held it so long that he had to strike another, for I had looked on Mrs. Lascelles at last. It was not an obviously interesting face, like Catherine's, but interest there was, of another kind. There was nothing intellectual in the low brow, no enthusiasm for books and pictures in the bold eyes, no witticism waiting on the full lips; but in the curve of those lips and the look from those eyes, as in the deep chin and the carriage of the hooded head, there was something, perhaps, not lower than the intellect in the scale of personal equipment. There was, at all events, character, and to spare. Even by the brief glimmer of a single

match, I could see that (and something more) for myself. Then came a moment's interval before Bob struck his light, and in that moment her face changed. As I saw it next, it appealed, it entreated, until the second match was flung away. And the appeal was to such purpose that I do not think I was five seconds silent.

"And what do you do with yourself up here all day? I mean, you hale people? Of course, I can only potter in the sun."

The question, perhaps, was better in intention than in tact. I did not mean them to take it to themselves, but Bob's answer showed that it was open to misconstruction.

"Some people climb," said he; "you'll know them by their noses. The glaciers are almost as bad, though, aren't they, Mrs. Lascelles? Lots of people potter about the glaciers. It's rather sport in the séracs; you've got to rope. But you'll find lots more loafing about the place all day, reading Tauchnitz novels, and watching people on the Matterhorn through the telescope. That's the sort of thing, isn't it, Mrs. Lascelles?"

She also had misunderstood the drift of my unlucky question. But there was nothing disingenuous in her reply. It reminded me of her eyes, as I had seen them by the light of the first match.

"Mr. Evers doesn't say that he is a climber himself, Captain Clephane; but he is, a very keen one, and so am I. We are both beginners, so we have begun together. It's such fun. We do some little thing every day; to-day we did the Schwarzee. You won't be any wiser, and the real climbers won't call it climbing; but it means three thousand feet, first and last. To-morrow we are going to the Monte Rosa hut. There is no saying where we shall end, if this weather holds!"

In this fashion Mrs. Lascelles not only made me a contemptuous present of information which I had never sought, but tacitly rebuked poor Bob for his gratuitous attempt at concealment. Clearly, they had nothing to conceal, and the hotel talk was neither more nor

less than hotel talk. There was, nevertheless, a certain self-consciousness in the attitude of either (unless I grossly misread them both) which, of itself, afforded some excuse for the gossips in my own mind.

Yet I did not know; every moment they gave me a new point of view. On my remarking genuinely enough that I only wished I could go with them, Bob Evers echoed the wish so heartily that I could not but believe that he meant what he said. On his side, in that case, there could be absolutely nothing. And yet, again, when Mrs. Lascelles had left us, as she did ere long, in the easiest and most natural manner, and when we had smoked a last cigarette together, then once more I was not so sure of him.

"That's rather a handsome woman," said I, with perhaps more than the authority to which my years entitled me. But I fancied it would "draw" poor Bob. And it did.

"Rather handsome!" said he, with a soft little laugh, not altogether complimentary to me. "Yes, I should almost go as far myself. Still, I don't see how *you* know; you haven't so much as seen her, my dear fellow."

"Haven't we been walking up and down outside this lighted veranda for the last ten minutes?"

Bob emitted a pitying puff.

"Wait till you see her in the sunlight! There's not many of them can stand it, as they get it up here. But she can—like anything!"

"She has made an impression on you, Bob," said I, but in so sedulously inoffensive a manner that his self-betrayal was all the greater when he told me, quite hotly, not to be an ass.

Now, I was more than ten years his senior, and Bob's manners were as charming as only the manners of a nice Eton boy can be. Therefore, I held my peace, but with difficulty refrained from nodding sapiently to myself. We took a couple of steps in silence, then Bob stopped short. I did the same. He was still a little stern; we were just within range of the veranda lights, and I can see (and hear) him to this day, almost as clearly as I did that night.

"I'm not much good at making apologies," he began, with rather less grace than becomes an apologist; but it was more than enough for me from Bob.

"Nor I at receiving them, my dear fellow!"

"Well, you've got to receive one now, whether you accept it or not. I was the ass myself, and I beg your pardon!"

Somehow, I felt it was a good deal for a lad to say, at that age, and with Bob's upbringing and popularity, even though he said it rather scornfully in the fewest words. The scorn was really for himself, and I could well understand it. Nay, I was glad to have something to forgive in the beginning, I with my unforgiveable mission, and would have laughed the matter off without another word, if Bob had let me.

"I'm a bit raw on the point," said he, taking my arm for a last turn, "and that's the truth. There was a fellow who came out with me, quite a good chap, really, and a tremendous pal of mine at Eton, yet he behaved like a lunatic about this very thing. Poor chap, he reads like anything, and I suppose he'd been overdoing it, for he actually asked me to choose between Mrs. Lascelles and himself! What could a fellow do, except let the poor, old simpleton go? They seem to think you can't be pals with a woman without wanting to make love to her. Such utter rot! I confess I lose my temper with them; but that doesn't excuse me in the least for losing it with you."

I assured him, on the other hand, that his very natural irritability on the subject made all the difference in the world. "But whom," I added, "do you mean by 'them'? Not anybody else in the hotel?"

"Good heavens, no!" cried Bob, finding a fair target for his scorn at last. "Do you think I care twopence what is said or thought by people I never saw in my life before and am never likely to see again? I know how I'm behaving. What does it matter what *they* think? Not that they're likely to bother their heads about us any more than we do about them."

"You don't know that."

"I certainly don't care," declared my lordly youth, with obvious sincerity. "No; I was only thinking of poor, old George Kennerley, and people like him, if there are any. I did care what he thought—that is, until I saw he was as mad as anything on the subject. It was too silly. I tell you what, though, I'd value *your* opinion!" And he came to another stop, and confronted me again, but this time such a picture of boyish impulse and of innocent trust in me (even by that faint light) that I was myself strongly inclined to be quite honest with him on the spot. But I only smiled and shook my head.

"Oh, no, you wouldn't," I assured him.

"But I tell you I would!" he cried. "Do *you* think there's any harm in my going about with Mrs. Lascelles, because I rather like her, and she rather likes me? I won't condescend to give you my word that I mean none!"

What answer could I give? His charming frankness quite disarmed me, the more completely because I felt that a dignified reticence would have been yet more characteristic of this clean, sweet youth, with his noble unconsciousness alike of evil and of evil speaking. I told him the truth—that there could be no harm at all, with such a fellow as himself. And he wrung my hand until he hurt it; but the physical pain was a relief.

Never can I remember going up to bed with a better opinion of another person and a worse one of myself. How could I go on with my thrice detestable undertaking? Now that I was so sure of him, why should I even think of it for another moment? Why not go back to London and tell his mother that her early confidence had not been misplaced, that the lad knew how to take care of himself, and, better still, of any woman whom he chose to honor with his bright, pure-hearted friendship? All this I felt, as strongly as any conviction I have ever held. Why, then, could I not write it at once to Catherine in so many words?

Strange how one forgets, how I had forgotten in half an hour! The reason

came home to me on the stairs and for the second time.

It had come home to me first by the light of those two matches, struck outside in the dark part of the deserted terrace. It was not the lad that I distrusted, but the woman, of whose face I had then obtained my only sight, but not my first.

I had known her, after all, in India, years before.

IV.

Once at Simla (the only time that I was ever there), it was my fortune to dance with a Mrs. Heymann, of Lahore, a tall woman, but a featherweight partner, and in all my dancing days I never had a better waltz. To my delight, she had one other left, though near the end, and we were actually dancing, when an excitable person came out of the card-room, flushed with liquor and losses, and carried her off in the most preposterous manner. It was a shock to me at the time to learn that this outrageous little man was my partner's husband. Months later, when I came across their case in the papers, it was, I am afraid, without much sympathy for the injured husband. The man was quite unpresentable, and I had seen no more of him at Simla, but of the woman just enough to know her by match-light on the terrace at the Riffel Alp.

And this was Bob's widow—this dashing divorcee! Dashing she was, as I now remembered her; fine in mold, finer in spirit, reckless and rebellious, as she well might be. I had seen her submit before a ballroom, but with the contempt that leads captivity captive. Seldom have I admired anything more. It was splendid even to remember—the ready outward obedience, the not less apparent indifference and disdain. There was a woman whom any man might admire, who had had it in her to be all things to some man! But Bob Evers was not a man at all. And this—and this—was his widow!

Was she one at all? How could one tell? Yes, it was Lascelles, the other name in the case, to the best of my recol-

lection. But had she any right to bear it? And, even supposing they had married, what had happened to the second husband? Widow or no widow, second marriage or no second marriage, defensible or indefensible, was this the right friend for a lad still fresh from Eton, the only son of his mother, who had sent me in secret to his side?

There was only one answer to the last question, whatever might be said or urged in reply to all the rest. I could not but feel that Catherine Evers had been justified in her instinct to an almost miraculous degree; that her worst fears were true enough, so far as the lady was concerned; and that Providence alone could have inspired her to call in an agent that knew what I knew, and, therefore, saw his duty as plainly as I already saw mine. But it is one thing to recognize a painful duty and quite another to know how to minimize the pain to those most affected by its performance. The problem was no easy one to my mind, and I lay awake upon it far into the night.

Tired out with travel, I fell asleep in the end, to awake with a start in broad daylight. The sun was pouring through the uncurtained dormer window of my room under the roof. And in the sunlight, looking his best in knickerbockers, as only thin men do, with face greased against wind and glare, and blue spectacles in rest upon an Alpine wideawake, stood the lad that had taken his share in keeping me awake.

"I'm awfully sorry," he began. "It's horrid cheek, but, when I saw your room full of light, I thought you might have been even earlier than I was. You must get them to give you curtains up here."

He had a note in his hand, and I thought, by his manner, there was something that he wished, and yet hesitated to tell me. I asked him, therefore, what it was.

"It's what we were speaking about last night!" burst out Bob. "That's why I've come to you. It's these silly fools that can't mind their own business, and think everybody else is like themselves! Here's a note from Mrs.

Lascalles, which makes it plain that that old idiot, George, is not the only one that has been talking about us, and some of the talk has reached her ears. She doesn't say so in so many words, but I can see it's that. She wants to get out of our expedition to Monte Rosa hut—wants me to go alone. The question is, ought I to let her get out of it? Does it matter one rap what this rabble says about us? I've come to ask your advice—you were so awfully decent about it all last night—and what you say I'll do."

I had begun to smile at Bob's notion of "a rabble;" this one happened to include a few quite eminent men, to say nothing of the average quality of the crowd, of which I had been able to form some opinion of my own. But I had already noticed in Bob the exclusiveness of the type to which he belonged, and had welcomed it as one does welcome the little faults of the well-nigh faultless. It was his last sentence that made me feel too great a hypocrite to go on smiling.

"It may not matter to you," I said, at length, "but it may to the lady."

"I suppose it does matter more to them?"

The sunburned face, puckered with a wry wistfulness, was only comic in its incongruous coat of grease. But I was under no temptation to smile. I had to confine my mind pretty closely to the general principle, and rather studiously to ignore the particular instance, before I could bring myself to answer the almost infantile inquiry in those honest eyes.

"My dear fellow, it must!"

Bob looked disappointed, but resigned.

"Well, then, I won't press it, though I'm not sure that I agree. You see, it's not as if there was, or ever would be, anything between us. The idea is absurd. We are simply friends, and nothing else. That's what makes all this so unnecessary. Now, she wants me to go alone, but I don't see the fun of that."

"Does she ask you to go alone?"

"She does. That's the worst of it."

I nodded, and he asked me why.

"She probably thinks it would be the best answer to the tittle-tattlers, Bob."

That was not a deliberate lie; not until the words were out did it occur to me that Mrs. Lascalles might now have another object in getting rid of her swain for the day. But Bob's eyes lighted in a way that made me feel a deliberate liar.

"By Jove!" he said. "I never thought of that. I don't agree with her, mind, but, if that's her game, I'll play it like a book. So long, Duncan! I'm not one of those who ask a man's advice without the slightest intention of ever taking it!"

"But I haven't ventured to advise you," I reminded the boy, with a cowardly eye to the remotest consequences.

"Perhaps not, but you've shown me what's the proper thing to do." And he went away to do it, there and then, like the blameless exception that I found him to so many human rules.

I had my breakfast upstairs after this, and lay for some considerable time a prey to feelings which I shall make no further effort to express, for this interview had not altered, but only intensified them.

And it was my ironic luck to be so circumstanced in a place where I could have enjoyed life to the hilt! Only to lie with the window open was to breathe air of a keener purity, a finer temper, a more exhilarating freshness, than had ever before entered my lungs; and to get up and look out of the window was to look into the limpid brilliance of a gigantic crystal, where the smallest object was in startling focus, and the very sunbeams cut with scissors. The people below trailed shadows like running ink. The light was ultra-tropical. One looked for drill suits and pith headgear, and was amazed to find pajamas insufficient at the open window.

Upon the terrace on the other side, when I eventually came down, there were cane chairs and Tauchnitz novels under the umbrella tents, and the telescope out and trained upon a party on the Matterhorn. Several were waiting turns at the telescope, my friend Quinby and the

hanging judge among them. But I searched under the umbrella tents, as well as one could from the top of the steps, before hobbling down to join the group.

"I have looked for an accident through that telescope," said the jocose judge, "fifteen Augusts running. They usually have one the day after I go."

"Good-morning, sir!" was Quinby's greeting; and I was instantly introduced to Sir Richard Sankey, with such a parade of my military history as made me wince and Sir Richard's eye twinkle. I fancied he had formed an unkind estimate of my tutelary friend, and lived to hear my impression confirmed in unjudicial language. But our first conversation was about the war, and it lasted until the judge's turn came for the telescope.

"Black with people!" he ejaculated. "They ought to have a constable up there to regulate the traffic."

But when I looked it was long enough before my inexperienced eye could discern the three midges strung on the single strand of cobweb against the sloping snow.

"They are coming down," explained the obliging Quinby. "That's one of the most difficult places, the lower edge of the top slope. It's just a little way along to the right where the First Accident was. . . . By the way, your friend Evers says he's going to do the Matterhorn before he goes."

It was unwelcome hearing, for Quinby had paused to regale me with a lightning sketch of the First Accident, and no one had contradicted his gruesome details.

"Is young Evers a friend of yours?" inquired the judge.

"He is."

The judge did not say another word.

But Quinby availed himself of the first opportunity of playing the Ancient Mariner to my Wedding Guest.

"I saw you talking to them," he told me, confidentially, "last night, you know!"

"Indeed!"

He took me by the sleeve.

"Of course, I don't know what you

said, but it's evidently had an effect. Evers has gone off alone for the first time since he has been here."

I shifted my position.

"You evidently keep an eye on him, Mr. Quinby."

"I do, Clephane. I find him a diverting study. He is not the only one in this hotel. There's old Teale on his balcony at the present minute, if you look up. He has the best room in the hotel; the only trouble is that it doesn't face the sun all day; he's not used to being in the shade, and you'll hear him damn the limelight man in heaps, one of these fine mornings. But your enterprising young friend is a more amusing person than Belgrave Teale."

I had heard enough of my enterprising young friend from this quarter.

"Do you never make any expeditions yourself, Mr. Quinby?"

"Sometimes." Quinby looked puzzled. "Why do you ask?" he was constrained to add.

"You should have volunteered instead of Mrs. Lascelles to-day. It would have been an excellent opportunity for prosecuting your own rather enterprising studies."

One would have thought that one's displeasure was plain enough at last; but not a bit of it. So far from resenting the rebuff, the fellow plucked my sleeve, and I saw at a glance that he had not even listened to my too elaborate sarcasm.

"Talk of the—lady!" he whispered. "Here she comes."

A second glance intercepted Mrs. Lascelles on the steps, with her bold good looks and her fine upstanding carriage, cut clean as a diamond in that intensifying atmosphere, and hardly less dazzling to the eye. Yet her cotton gown was simplicity's self; it was the right setting for such natural brilliance, a brilliance of eyes and teeth and coloring, a more uncommon brilliance of expression. Indeed, it was a wonderful expression, brave, rather than sweet, yet capable of sweetness, too, and for the moment, at least, nobly free from the defensive bitterness

which was to mark it later. So she stood upon the steps, the talk of the hotel, trailing a cane chair behind her with characteristic independence, while she sought a shady place for it, even as I had stood seeking for her; before she found one I was hobbling toward her.

"Oh, thanks, Captain Clephane, but I couldn't think of allowing you! Well, then, between us, if you insist. Here under the wall, I think, is as good a place as any."

She pointed out a clear space in the rapidly narrowing ribbon of shade, and there I soon saw Mrs. Lascelles settled with her book (a trashy novel, that somehow brought Catherine Evers rather sharply before my mind's eye), in an isolation as complete as could be found upon the crowded terrace, and too intentional on her part to permit of an intrusion on mine. I lingered a moment, nevertheless.

"So you didn't go to that hut, after all, Mrs. Lascelles?"

"No." She waited a moment before looking up at me. "And I'm afraid Mr. Evers will never forgive me," she added, after her look.

I was not going to say that I had seen him before he started, but it was an opportunity of speaking generally of the lad. Thus I found myself commenting on the coincidence of our meeting again—he and I—and again lying before I realized that it was a lie. But Mrs. Lascelles sat looking up at me with her fine and candid eyes, as though she knew as well as I which was the real coincidence, and knew that I knew, into the bargain. It gave me the disconcerting sensation of being detected and convicted at one blow. Bob Evers failed me as a topic, and I stood like the fool I felt.

"I am sure you ought not to stand about so much, Captain Clephane."

Mrs. Lascelles was smiling faintly as I prepared to take her hint.

"Doesn't it really do you any harm?" she added, in time to detain me.

"No, just the opposite. I am ordered to take all the exercise I can."

"Even walking?"

"Even hobbling, Mrs. Lascelles, if I don't overdo it."

She sat some moments in thought. I guessed what she was thinking, and I was right.

"There are some lovely walks quite near, Captain Clephane. But you have to climb a little, either going or coming."

"I could climb a little," said I, making up my mind. "It's within the meaning of the act—it would do me good. Which way will you take me, Mrs. Lascelles?"

Mrs. Lascelles looked up quickly, surprised at a boldness on which I was already complimenting myself. But it is the only way with a bold woman.

"Did I say I would take you at all, Captain Clephane?"

"No, but I very much hope you will." And our eyes met as fairly as they had done by matchlight the night before.

"I will," said Mrs. Lascelles, "because I want to speak to you."

V.

We had come farther than was wise without a rest, but all the seats on the way were in full view of the hotel, and I had been irritated by divers looks and whisperings as we traversed the always crowded terrace. Bob Evers, no doubt, would have turned a deaf ear and a blind eye to them. I could pretend to do so. But pretense was evidently one of my strong points. I had not Bob's fine natural regardlessness, for all my seniority and presumably superior knowledge of the world.

So we had climbed the zigzags to the right of the Riffelberg, and followed the footpath overlooking the glacier, in the silence enjoined by single file, but at last we were seated on the hillside, a trifle beyond that emerald patch which some humorist has christened the cricket ground. Beneath us were the séracs of the Gorner Glacier, teased and tousled like a fringe of frozen breakers. Beyond the séracs was the main stream of comparatively smooth ice,

with its mourning band of moraine, and beyond that the mammoth sweep and curve of the Théodule where these glaciers join. Peak after peak of dazzling snow dwindled away to the left. Only the gaunt Riffelhorn reared a brown head against the blue. And there we sat, Mrs. Lascelles and I, with all this before us and a rock behind, while I wondered what my companion meant to say and how she would begin.

I had not to wonder long.

"You were very good to me last night, Captain Clephane."

There was evidently no beating about the bush for Mrs. Lascelles. I thoroughly approved, but was, nevertheless, somewhat embarrassed for the moment.

"I—really, I don't know how, Mrs. Lascelles!"

"Oh, yes, you do, Captain Clephane; you recognized me at a glance, as I did you."

"I certainly thought I did," said I, poking about with the ferrule of one of my sticks.

"You know you did."

"You are making me know it."

"Captain Clephane, you knew it all along; but we won't argue that point. I am not going to deny my identity. It is very good of you to give me the chance, if rather unnecessary. I am not a criminal, after all. Still, you could have made me feel like one, last night, and many a man would have done so, either for the fun of it or from want of tact."

I looked inquiringly at Mrs. Lascelles. She could tell me what she pleased, but I was not going to anticipate her by displaying an independent knowledge of matters which she might still care to keep to herself. If she chose to open up a painful subject, well, the pain be upon her own head. Yet, I must say that there was very little of it in her face as our eyes met. There was the eager candor that one could not help admiring, and the glowing look of gratitude which I had done so ridiculously little to earn; but the fine, flushed face betrayed neither pain nor shame, nor the affectation of one or the other.

There was a certain shyness with the candor. That was all.

"You know quite well what I mean," continued Mrs. Lascelles, with a genuine smile at my disingenuous face. "When you met me before it was under another name, which you have probably quite forgotten."

"No, I remember it."

"Do you remember my husband?"

"Perfectly."

"Did you ever hear——"

Her lip trembled; I dropped my eyes. "Yes," I admitted, "or, rather, I saw it for myself in the papers. It's no use pretending I didn't, nor yet that I was the least bit surprised or—or anything else!"

That was not one of my tactful speeches. It was culpably, might, indeed, have been wilfully, ambiguous; and yet it was the kind of clumsy and impulsive utterance which has the ring of a good intention, and is thus inoffensive except to such as seek excuses for offense. My instincts about Mrs. Lascelles did not place her in this category at all. Nevertheless, the ensuing pause was long enough to make me feel uneasy, and my companion only broke it as I was in the act of framing an apology.

"May I bore you, Captain Clephane?" she asked, abruptly. I looked at her once more. She had regained an equal mastery of face and voice, and the admirable candor of her eyes was undimmed by the smallest trace of tears.

"You may try," said I, smiling with obvious gallantry.

"If I tell you something about myself from that time on, will you believe what I say?"

"You are the last person whom I should think of disbelieving."

"Thank you, Captain Clephane."

"On the other hand, I would much rather you didn't say anything that gave you pain, or that you might afterward regret."

There was a touch of weariness in Mrs. Lascelles' smile, a rather pathetic touch, to my mind, as she shook her head.

"I am not very sensitive to pain," she

said; "that is the one thing to be said for having to bear a good deal while you are fairly young. I want you to know more about me, because I believe you are the only person here that knows anything at all. And, then—you didn't give me away last night."

I pointed to the grassy ledge in front of us, such a vivid green against the frozen snow a hundred feet below.

"I am not pushing you over there," I said. "I take about as much credit for that."

"Ah!" sighed Mrs. Lascelles, "but that dear boy, who turns out to be a friend of yours, he knows less than anybody else! He doesn't even suspect. It would have hurt me, yes, it would have hurt even me, to be given away to him! You didn't do it while I was there, and I know you didn't when I had turned my back."

"Of course you know I didn't," I echoed, rather testily, as I took out a cigarette. The case reminded me of the night before. But I did not again hand it to Mrs. Lascelles.

"Well, then," she continued, "since you didn't give me away, even without thinking, I want you to know that, after all, there isn't quite so much to give away as there might have been. A divorce, of course, is always a divorce. There is no getting away from that, or from mine. But I really did marry again. And I really am the widow they think I am."

I looked quickly up at her, in pure pity and compassion for one gone so far in sorrow and yet such a little way in life. It was a sudden feeling, an unpremeditated look, but I might as well have spoken aloud. Mrs. Lascelles read me unerringly, and shook her head, sadly but decidedly, while her eyes gazed calmly into mine.

"It was not a happy marriage, either," she said, as impersonally as if speaking of another woman. "You may think what you like of me for saying so to a comparative stranger; but I won't have your sympathy on false pretenses simply because Major Lascelles is dead. Did you ever meet him, by the way?"

And she mentioned an Indian* regiment. But the major and I had never met.

"Well, it was not very happy for either of us. I suppose such marriages never are. I know they are never supposed to be. Even if the couple are everything to each other, there is all the world to point his finger, and all the world's wife to turn her back, and you have to care a good deal to get over that. But you may have been desperate in the first instance; you may have said to yourself that the fire couldn't be much worse than the frying-pan. In that case, of course, you deserve no sympathy, and nothing is more irritating to me than the sympathy I don't deserve. It's a matter of temperament; mine obliges me to speak out, even if it puts people more against me than there were already. No, you needn't say anything, Captain Clephane; you didn't express your sympathy. I stopped you in time. . . . And yet it is rather hard, when one's still reasonably young, with almost everything before one—to be a marked woman all one's time!"

Up to her last words, despite an inviting pause after almost every sentence, I had succeeded in holding my tongue; though she was looking wistfully now at the distant snow peaks, and obviously bestowing upon herself the sympathy she did not want from me (as I had been told in so many words, yet more plainly in the accompanying brief encounter between our eyes), yet had I resisted every temptation to put in my word until these last two or three from Mrs. Lascelles. They, however, demanded a denial, and I told her it was absurd to describe herself in such terms.

"I am marked," she persisted. "Wherever I go I may be known, as you knew me here. If it hadn't been you, it would have been somebody else, and I should know of it indirectly, instead of directly; but even supposing I had escaped it altogether at this hotel, the next would probably have made up for it."

"Do you stay much in hotels?"

There had been something in her voice

which made the question a very natural one, yet it was scarcely asked before I would have given a good deal to recall it.

"There is nowhere else to stay," said Mrs. Lascelles, "unless one has a house alone, and that is costlier and far less comfortable. You see, one does make a friend or two sometimes—before one is found out."

"But surely your people——"

This time I did check myself.

"My people," said Mrs. Lascelles, "have washed their hands of me."

"But Major Lascelles—surely *his* people——"

"They washed their hands of him! You see, they would be the first to tell you he had always been rather wild; but his crowning act of madness in their eyes was his marriage. It was worse than the worst thing he had ever done before. Still, it is not for me to say anything, or feel anything, against his family." . . .

And then I knew that they were making her an allowance. It was more than I wanted to know. The ground was too delicate and led nowhere in particular. Still, it was difficult not to take a certain amount of interest in a handsome woman who had made such a wreck of her life so young, who was so utterly alone, so proud and independent in her loneliness, and apparently quite fine-hearted and unspoiled. But for Bob Evers and his mother, the interest that I took might have been a little different in kind; but even with my solicitude for them there mingled already no small consideration for the social solitary whom I watched now as she sat peering across the glacier, the foremost figure in a world of high lights and great backgrounds, and whom to watch was to admire, even against the greatest of them all. Alas! mere admiration could not change my task, or stay my hand; it could but clog me by destroying my singleness of purpose, and giving me a double-heart to match my double-face.

Since, however, a detestable duty had been undertaken, and since it was more apparent as a duty than I had dreamed

of finding it, there was nothing to do but to go through with the thing and make immediate enemies of my friends. So I set my teeth and talked of Bob. I was glad Mrs. Lascelles liked him. I had known his mother years ago.

"And what is she like?" asked Mrs. Lascelles, calling her fine eyes in from infinity and fixing them once more on me.

VI.

Now, if upon a hard, bright winter's morning, you were suddenly asked to describe an ideal summer's day, either you would have to stop and think a little, or your imagination is more elastic than mine. Yet you might have a passionate preference for summer. To me, Lady Catherine Evers and this Mrs. Lascelles were as opposite to each other as winter and summer, or the poles, or any other notorious antithesis. There was no comparison between them in my mind, yet as I sat with one among the sunlit, unfamiliar Alps, it was a distinct effort to picture the other in the little London room I loved so well. For it was always among her books and pictures that I thought of Catherine, and to think was to wish myself there at her side, rather than to wish her here at mine. Catherine's appeal, I used to think, was to the highest and best in me, to brain and soul and young ambition, and, withal, to one's love of wit and sense of humor. Mrs. Lascelles, on the other hand, struck me primarily in the light of some splendid and spirited animal. I still liked to dwell upon her dancing. She satisfied the mere eye more and more. But I had no reason to suppose that she knew right from wrong in art or literature, any more than she would seem to have known it in life itself. Her Tauchnitz novel lay beside her on the grass, and I again reflected that it would not have found a place on Catherine's loftiest shelf. Catherine would have raved about the view, and made delicious fun of Quinby and the judge, and we should have sat together talking poetry and harmless scandal by the hap-

py hour. Mrs. Lascelles probably took place and people alike for granted. But she had lived, and, as an animal, she was superb! I looked again into her healthy face and speaking eyes, with their bitter knowledge of good and evil, their scorn of scorn, their redeeming honesty and candor. The contrast was complete in every detail, except the widowhood of both women; but I did not pursue it any further, for once more there was but one woman in my thoughts, and she sat near me, under a red parasol, clashing so humanly with the everlasting snows!

"You don't answer my question, Captain Clephane. How much for your thoughts?"

"I'll make you a present of them, Mrs. Lascelles. I was beginning to think that a lot of rot has been written about the eternal snows, and the mountain tops, and all the rest of it. There are a few lines in that last little volume of Browning—"

I stopped of my own accord, for, upon reflection, the lines would have made a rather embarrassing quotation, but, meanwhile, Mrs. Lascelles had taken alarm on other grounds.

"Oh, *don't* quote Browning!"

"Why not?"

"He is far too deep for me; besides, I don't care for poetry, and I was asking you about Lady Catherine Evers."

"Well," I said, with some little severity, "she's an awfully clever woman."

"Clever enough to understand Browning?"

"Quite."

If this was irony, it was also self-restraint, for it was to Catherine's enthusiasm that I owed my own. The debt was one of such magnitude as a life of devotion could scarcely have repaid, for, to whom does one owe as much as to those who first lifted the scales from our eyes and awakened within us a soul for all such things? Catherine had been to me what I instantly desired to become to this benighted beauty; but the desire was not worth entertaining, since I hardly expected to be many minutes longer on speaking terms with Mrs.

Lascelles. I recalled the fact that it was I who had broached the subject of Bob Evers and his mother, together with my unpalatable motive for so doing. And I was seeking in my mind, against the grain, I must confess, for a short cut back to Bob, when Mrs. Lascelles suddenly led the way.

"I don't think," said she, "that Mr. Evers takes after his mother."

"I am afraid he doesn't," I replied, "in that respect."

"And I am glad," she said, "I do like a boy to be a boy. The only son of his mother is always in danger of becoming something else. Tell me, Captain Clephane, are they very devoted to each other?"

There was some new note in her voice. Was it merely wistful, was it really jealous, or was either element the product of my own imagination? I made answer, while I wondered:

"Absolutely devoted, I should say; but it's years since I saw them together. Bob was a small boy then, and one of the jolliest. Still, I never expected him to grow up the charming chap he is now."

Mrs. Lascelles sat gazing at the great curve of the Théodule Glacier. I watched her face.

"He is charming," she said, at length. "I am not sure that I ever met anybody quite like him, or, rather, I am sure that I never did. He is so quiet, in a way, and yet so wonderfully confident and at ease!"

"That's Eton," said I. "He is the best type of Eton boy, and the best type of Eton boy," I declared, airing the little conviction with a flourish, "is one of the greatest works of God."

"I dare say you're right," said Mrs. Lascelles, smiling indulgently; "but what is it? How do you define it? It isn't 'side,' and yet I can quite imagine people that don't know him thinking that it is. He is cocksure of himself, but of nothing else; that seems to me to be the difference. No one could possibly be more simple in himself. He has the assurance of a man of fifty, yet it isn't put on; it's neither bumptious nor affected, but just as natural in Mr.

Evers as shyness and awkwardness in the ordinary youth one meets."

Were we all mistaken? Was this the way in which a designing woman would speak of the object of her designs? Not that I thought so hardly of Mrs. Lascelles myself, but I did think that she might well fall in love with Bob Evers—at least, as well as he with her. Was this, then, the way in which a woman would be likely to speak of the young man with whom she had fallen in love? To me the appreciation sounded too frank and discerning and acute. Yet I could not call it dispassionate, and frankness was this woman's outstanding merit, though I was beginning to discover others as well. Moreover, the fact remained that they had been greatly talked about; that, at any rate, must be stopped, and I was there to stop it.

I began to pick my words.

"It's all Eton, except what is in the blood, and it's all a question of manners, or, rather, of manner. Don't misunderstand me, Mrs. Lascelles. I don't say that Bob isn't independent in character as well as in his ways, but only that, when all's said, he's still a boy, and not a man. He can't possibly have a man's experience of the world, or even of himself. He has a young head on his shoulders, after all, if not a younger one than many a boy with half the assurance that you admire in him."

Mrs. Lascelles looked at me point-blank.

"Do you mean that he can't take care of himself?"

"I don't say that."

"Then, what do you say?"

The fine eyes met mine without a flicker. The full mouth was curved at the corners in a tolerant, unsuspecting smile. It was hard to have to make an enemy of so handsome and good-humored a woman. And was it necessary? Was it even wise? As I hesitated, she turned and glanced downward once more toward the glacier, then rose and went to the lip of our grassy ledge, and, as she returned, I caught the sound which she had been the first to hear. It was the gritty planting of nailed boots upon hard, smooth rock.

"I'm afraid you can't say it now," whispered Mrs. Lascelles. "Here's Mr. Evers coming this way back from the Monte Rosa hut! I'm going to give him a surprise!"

And it was a genuine one that she gave him, for I heard his boyish greeting before I saw his hot, brown face, and there was no mistaking the sudden delight of both. It was sudden, spontaneous, complete, until his eyes lit on me. Even then his smile did not disappear, but it changed. So did his tone.

"Good heavens!" cried Bob. "How on earth did you get up here? By rail to the Riffelberg, I hope?"

"On my sticks."

"It was much too far for him," added Mrs. Lascelles, "and all my fault for showing him the way. But I am afraid there was contributory obstinacy in Captain Clephane, too; he simply wouldn't turn back. And now tell us about yourself, Mr. Evers; surely, we were not coming back this way?"

"We were not," said Bob, with a something sardonic in his little laugh, "but I thought I might as well. It's the long way, six miles on end upon the glacier."

"But have you really been to the hut?"

"Rather!"

"And where's our guide?"

"Oh, I couldn't be bothered with a guide all to myself."

"My dear young man, you might have stepped straight into a crevasse!"

"I very nearly did," laughed Bob, again, with something odd about his laughter. "But, if you won't think me awfully rude, I'll push on back, and get changed. I'm as hot as anything, and not fit to be seen."

And he was gone, after very little more than a minute from first to last—gone with rather an elaborate salute to Mrs. Lascelles and rather a cavalier nod to me. But, then, neither of us had made any effort to detain him, and a notable omission I thought it in Mrs. Lascelles, though to the lad himself it may well have seemed as strange in the old friend as in the new.

"What was it," asked Mrs. Lascelles,

when we were on our own way home, "that you were going to say about Mr. Evers when he appeared in that extraordinary way."

"I forget," said I, immorally.

"Really? So soon? Don't you remember, I thought you meant that he couldn't take care of himself, and you were just going to tell me what you did mean?"

"Oh, well, it wasn't that, because he can!"

"But, as a matter of fact, I had seen my way to taking care of Bob without saying a word either to him or to Mrs. Lascelles, or, at all events, without making enemies of them both.

VII.

My plan was quite obvious in its simplicity, and not in the least discreditable from my point of view. It was, perhaps, inevitable that a boy like Bob should imagine I was trying to "cut him out," as my blunt friend, Quinby, phrased it to my face. I had not, of course, the smallest desire to do any such vulgar thing. All I wanted was to make myself, if possible, as agreeable to Mrs. Lascelles as this dear youth had done before me, and, in any case, to share with him all the perils of her society. In other words, I meant to squeeze into "the imminent deadly breach" beside Bob Evers, not necessarily in front of him. But, if there was nothing dastardly in this, neither was there anything heroic, since I was proof against that kind of deadliness, if Bob was not.

On the other hand, the whole character of my mission was affected by the decision at which I had now arrived. There was no longer any necessity to speak plainly to anybody. That odious duty was eliminated from my plan of campaign, and the "frontal attack" of recent history discarded for the "turning movement" of the day. So I had learned something in South Africa, after all. I had learned how to avoid hard knocks which might very well do more harm than good to the cause I had at

heart. That cause was still sharply defined before my mind, the first and most sacred consideration. I wrote a reassuring dispatch to Catherine Evers, and took it myself to the little post office opposite the hotel that very evening, before dressing for dinner. But I cannot say that I was thinking of Catherine when I proceeded to spoil three successive ties in the tying.

Yet I can only repeat that I felt absolutely proof against the real cause of my solicitude. It is the most delightful feeling, where a handsome woman is concerned. The judgment is not warped by passion or clouded by emotion; you see the woman as she is, not as you wish to see her, and, if she disappoints, it does not matter. You are not left to choose between systematic self-deception and a humiliating admission of your mistake. The lady has not been placed upon an impossible pedestal, and she has not toppled down. In this case, the lady started at the most advantageous disadvantage; every admirable quality—her candor, her courage, her spirited independence, her evident determination to piece a broken life together again, and make the best of it—told doubly in her favor to me, with my special knowledge of her past. It would be too much to say that I was deeply interested; but Mrs. Lascelles had inspired me with a certain sympathy and dispassionate regard. Cultivated she was not, in the conventional sense, but she knew more than can be learned from books. She knew life at first hand, had drained the cup for herself, and yet could savor the lees. Not that she enlarged any further on her own past. Mrs. Lascelles was never a great talker, like Catherine; but she was certainly a woman to whom one could talk. And talk to her I did thenceforward, with a conscientious conviction that I was doing my duty, and only an occasional qualm for its congenial character, while Bob listened, with a wondering eye, or went his own way without a word.

It is easy to criticise my conduct now. It would have been difficult to act otherwise at the time. I am speaking of the evening after my walk with Mrs. Las-

celles, of the next day, when it rained, and now of my third night at the hotel. The sky had cleared. The glass was high. There was a finer edge than ever on the silhouetted mountains against the stars. It appeared that Bob and Mrs. Lascelles had talked of taking their lunch to the Findelen Glacier on the next fine day, for he came up and reminded her of it, as she sat with me in the glazed veranda after dinner. I had seen him standing alone under the stars a few minutes before, so this was the result of his cogitation. But in his manner there was nothing studied, much less awkward, and his smile even included me, though he had not spoken to me alone all day.

"Oh, no, I hadn't forgotten, Mr. Evers. I am looking forward to it," said my companion, with a smile of her own to which the most jealous swain could not have taken exception.

Bob Evers looked hard at me.

"You'd better come, too," said he.

"It's probably too far," said I, quite intending to play second fiddle next day, for it was really Bob's turn.

"Not for a man who has been up to the Cricket-ground," he rejoined.

"But it's dreadfully slippery," put in Mrs. Lascelles, with a sympathetic glance at my sticks.

"Let him, get them shod like alpenstocks," quoth Bob, "and nails in his boots; then they'll be ready when he does the Matterhorn!"

It might have passed for boyish banter, but I knew that it was something more; the use of the third person changed from chaff to scorn as I listened, and my sympathetic resolution went to the winds.

"Thank you," I replied; "in that case, I shall be delighted to come, and I'll take your tip at once by giving orders about my boots."

And, with that, I resigned my chair to Bob, not sorry for the chance; he should not be able to say that I had monopolized Mrs. Lascelles without intermission from the first. Nevertheless, I was annoyed with him for what he had said, and, for the moment, my actions were no part of my scheme. I was thus in no

mood for a familiarity from Quinby, who was hanging about the door between the veranda and the hall, and would not let me pass.

"That is awfully nice of you," he had the impudence to whisper.

"What do you mean?"

"Giving that poor, young beggar another chance!"

"I don't understand you!"

"Oh, I like that! You know very well that you've gone in on the military ticket, and deliberately cut out the poor youngster——"

I did not wait to hear the end of this gratuitous observation. It was very rude of me, but in another minute I should have been guilty of a worse affront. My annoyance had deepened into something like dismay. It was not only Bob Evers who was misconstruing my little attentions to Mrs. Lascelles. I was more or less prepared for that. But here were outsiders talking about us—the three of us! So far from putting a stop to the talk, I had given it a regular fillip; here were Quinby and his friends as keen as possible to see what would happen next, and probably betting on a row. The situation had taken a sudden turn for the worse. I forgot the pleasant hours that I had passed with Mrs. Lascelles, and began to wish myself well out of the whole affair. But I had now no intention of getting out of the glacier expedition. I would not have missed it on any account. Bob had brought that on himself.

And, I dare say, we seemed a sufficiently united trio, as we marched along the pretty, winding path to the Findelen next morning. Dear Bob was not only such a gentleman, but such a man, that it was almost a pleasure to be at secret issue with him; he would make way for me at our lady's side, listen with interest when she made me spin my martial yarns, laugh if there was aught to laugh at, and, in a word, give me every conceivable chance. His manners might have failed him for one heated moment over night; they were beyond all praise this morning; and I discerned, repeatedly, a morbid sporting dread of giving the adversary less than

fair play. It was sad for me to consider myself as such to Catherine's son, but I was determined not to let the thought depress me, and there was much outward occasion for good cheer. The morning was a perfect one in every way. The rain had released all the pungent aromas of the mountain woods through which we passed. Snowy height came in dazzling contrast with a torquoise sky. The toy town of Zermatt spattered the green hollow far below. And before me on the narrow path went Bob Evers, in a flannel suit, followed by Mrs. Lascelles and her red parasol, though he carried her alpenstock with his own in readiness for the glacier.

Thither we came in this order, I at least very hot from hard hobbling to keep up; but the first breath from the glacier cooled me like a bath, and the next like the great drink in the second stanza of the "Ode to a Nightingale." I could have shouted out for pleasure, and must have done so but for the engrossing business of keeping a footing on the sloping ice, with its soiled margin of yet more treacherous moraine. Yet, on the glacier itself, I was less handicapped than I had been on the way, and hopped along finely, with my two shod sticks and the sharp, new nails in my boots. Bob, however, was invariably in the van, and Mrs. Lascelles seemed more disposed to wait for me than to hurry after him. I think he pushed the pace unwittingly, under the prick of those emotions which otherwise were under such excellent control. I can see him now, continually waiting for us on the brow of some glistening ice slope, leaning on his alpenstock, and looking back, jet-black by contrast between the blinding lines of ice and sky.

But once he waited on the brink of some unfathomable crevasse, and then we all three cowered together and peeped down. The sides were green and smooth and sinister, like a crack in the sea, yet so close together that one could not have fallen out of sight; yet, when Bob loosened a lump of ice and kicked it in, we heard it clattering from wall to wall in prolonged diminuendo before the faint splash just reached our

ears. Mrs. Lascelles shuddered, and threw out a hand to prevent me from peering further over. The gesture was obviously impersonal and instinctive, as an older eye would have seen, but Bob's was smoldering when mine met it next, and in the ensuing advance he left us farther behind than ever. But on the rock where we had our lunch he was once more himself, bright and boyish, careless and assured. So he continued till the end of that chapter. On the way home, moreover, he never once forged ahead, but was always ready with a hand for Mrs. Lascelles at the awkward places; and, on the way through the woods, nothing would serve him but that I should set the pace, that we might all keep together. Judge, therefore, of my surprise when he came to my room, as I was dressing for the absurdly early dinner which is the one blot upon Riffel Alp arrangements, with the startling remark that we "might as well run straight with each other."

"By all means, my dear fellow," said I, turning to him, with the lather on my chin. He was dressed already, as perfectly as usual, and his hands were in his pockets. But his fresh, brown face was as grave as any judge's, and his mouth as stern. I went on to ask, disingenuously enough, if we had not been "running straight with each other" as it was.

"Not quite," said Bob Evers, dryly, "and we might as well, you know!"

"To be sure; but don't mind if I go on shaving, and pray speak for yourself."

"I will," he rejoined. "Do you remember our conversation the night you came?"

"More or less."

"I mean when you and I were alone together, before we turned in."

"Oh, yes, I remember something about it."

"It would be too silly to expect you to remember much," he went on, after a pause, with a more delicate irony than heretofore. "But, as a matter of fact, I believe I said it was all rot that people talked about the impossibility of being mere friends with a woman, and all that sort of thing."

"I believe you did."

"Well, then, that *was* rot—that is all!"

I turned round, with my razor in mid-air.

"My dear fellow!" I exclaimed.

"Quite funny, isn't it?" he laughed, but rather harshly, while his mountain bronze deepened under my scrutiny.

"You are not in earnest, Bob!" said I; and on the word his laughter ended, his color went.

"I am!" he answered, through his teeth. "*Are you?*"

Never was war carried more suddenly into the enemy's country, or that enemy's breath more completely taken away than mine. What could I say? "As much as you are, I should hope!" was what I ultimately said.

The lad stood raking me with a steady fire from his blue eyes.

"I mean to marry her," he said, "if she will have me!"

There was no laughing at him. Though barely twenty, as I knew, he was man enough for any age, as we faced each other in my room, and a man that knew his own mind, into the bargain.

"But, my dear Bob," I ventured to remonstrate, "you are years too young——"

"That's my business. I am in earnest. What about you?"

I breathed again.

"My good fellow," said I, "you are at perfect liberty to give yourself away to me, but you really mustn't expect me to do quite the same for you!"

"I expect precious little. I can tell you!" the lad rejoined, hotly. "Not that it matters twopence, so long as you are not misled by anything I said the other day. I prefer to run straight with you; you can run as you like with me. Only I didn't want you to think that I was saying one thing and doing another. I meant all I said at the time, or thought I did, until you came along and made me look into myself more closely than I had done before. I won't say how you managed it. You will probably see for yourself. But I'm very much obliged to you, whatever happens. And

now that we understand each other, there's no more to be said, and I'll clear out."

There was, indeed, no more to be said, and I made no attempt to detain him, for I did see for myself, only too clearly and precisely, how I had managed to precipitate the very thing I had come out from England expressly to prevent.

VIII.

I had quite forgotten one element which plays its part in most affairs of the affections. I mean the element of pique. Bob Evers, with the field to himself, had been sensible and safe enough; it was my intrusion, and nothing else, that had fanned his boyish flame into this premature conflagration. Of that I felt convinced. But Bob would not believe me if I told him so; and what else was there for me to tell him? To betray Catherine, and the secret of my presence, would simply hasten an irrevocable step. To betray Mrs. Lascelles, and *her* secret, would certainly not prevent it. Both courses were out of the question upon other grounds. Yet what else was left?

To speak out boldly to Mrs. Lascelles, to betray Catherine and myself to her?

I shrank from that; nor had I any right to reveal a secret which was not mine alone. What, then, was I to do? Here was this lad professedly on the point of proposing to this woman. It was useless to speak to the lad; it was impossible to speak to the woman. To be sure, she might not accept him; but the mere knowledge that she was to have the chance seemed enormously to increase my responsibility in the matter. As for the dilemma in which I now found myself, deservedly, if you please, there was no comparing it with any former phase of this affair.

"Oh, what a tangled web we weave,
When first we practice to deceive."

The hackneyed lines sprang unbidden, as though to augment my punishment; then, suddenly, I reflected that it was not in my own interest I had begun to

practice my deceit; and the thought of Catherine braced me up, perhaps partly because I felt that it should. I put myself back into the fascinating little room in Elm Park Gardens. I saw the slender figure in the picture hat, I heard the half-humorous and half-pathetic voice. After all, it was for Catherine I had undertaken this ridiculous mission; she was, therefore, my first, and had much better be my only, consideration. I could not run with the hare after hunting with the hounds. I should have liked to see Catherine's face if I had expressed any sympathy with the hare!

No; it was better to be unscrupulously stanch to one woman than weakly chivalrous toward both. My mind was made up by the end of dinner. There was only one chance now of saving the wretched Bob, or, rather, one way of setting to work to save him, and that was by actually adopting the course with which he had already credited me. He thought I was "trying to cut him out." Well, I would try!

But, the more I thought of him, of Mrs. Lascelles, of them both, the less sanguine I felt of success; for, had I been she (I could not help admitting it to myself), as lonely, as reckless, as unlucky, I would have married the generous young idiot on the spot! Not that my own marriage with Mrs. Lascelles was an end that I contemplated for a moment as I took my cynical resolve. And now I trust that I have made both my position and my intentions very plain, and have written myself down neither more of a fool nor less of a knave than circumstances (or my own infirmities) combined to make me at this juncture of my career.

The design was still something bolder than its execution, and, if Bob did not propose that night, it was certainly no fault of mine. I saw him with Mrs. Lascelles on the terrace after dinner. But I had neither the heart nor the face to thrust myself upon them. Everything was altered since Bob had shown me his hand; there were certain rules of the game which even I was now bound to observe. So I left him in undisputed possession of the perilous ground, and,

being in a heavy glow from the strong air of the glacier, went early to my room, where I lay long enough without a wink, but quite prepared for Bob, with news of his engagement, at every step in the corridor.

Next day was Sunday, and, chiefly, I am afraid, because there was neither blind nor curtain to my dormer-window, and the morning sun streamed full upon my pillow, I got up and went to early service in the little tin Protestant church. It was wonderfully well attended. Quinby was there, a head taller than anybody else, a thickness leaner, and some sizes smaller in heads. Mr. Belgrave Teale, fit for church parade, or for the afternoon act in one of his fashionable plays, took round the offertory-bags, into which Mr. Justice Sankey (in racecourse checks) dropped gold. It was not the sort of service at which one cares to look about one, but I was among the early comers, and I could not help it. Mrs. Lascelles, however, was there before me, whereas Bob Evers was not there at all. Nevertheless, I did not mean to walk back with her until I saw her walking very much alone, a sort of cynosure, even on the way from church, though humble and grave, and unconscious as any country maid. I watched her, with the rest, but in a spirit of my own. Some subtle change seemed to have come over her, also, in her turn. Had that rash lad really declared himself over night, and had she actually accepted him? A new load seemed to rest upon her shoulders, a new anxiety, a new care; and, as if to confirm my idea, Mrs. Lascelles started and changed color as I came up with her.

"I didn't see you in church," she remarked, in her own natural fashion, when we had exchanged the ordinary salutations.

"I am afraid you wouldn't expect to see me, Mrs. Lascelles."

"Well, as a matter of fact, I didn't; but I suppose," added Mrs. Lascelles, as her voice fell into a pensive but not a pathetic key, "I suppose it is you who are much more surprised at seeing me. I can't help it if you are, Captain Cle-

phane. I am not really a religious person. I have not flown to that extreme, as yet. But it has been a comfort to me, sometimes; and so, sometimes, I go."

It was very simply said, but with a sigh at the end that left me wondering whether she was in any new need of spiritual comfort. Did she already find herself in the dilemma in which I had imagined her, and was it really a dilemma to her? New hopes began to chase my fears and were gaining upon them when a flannel suit on the sunlit steps caused a temporary check. There was Bob waiting for us, his hands in his pockets, a smile upon his face, but in the slope of his shoulders and the carriage of his head a certain indefinable but very visible attention and interest.

"Is Mrs. Evers a religious woman?" asked my companion, her step slowing ever so slightly as we approached.

"Not exactly; but she knows all about it," I replied.

"And doesn't believe very much? Then we shouldn't hit it off," exclaimed Mrs. Lascelles, "for I know nothing and believe all I can. Nevertheless, I'm not going to church again to-day."

The last words were in a sort of aside, and I afterward heard that Bob and Mrs. Lascelles had attended the later service together on the previous Sunday. But I guessed almost as much on the spot, and it put out of my head both the unjust assumption of the earlier remark concerning Lady Catherine and the contrast between them which Mrs. Lascelles could hardly afford to emphasize.

"Let's go somewhere else, instead—Zermatt—or anywhere else you like!" I suggested, eagerly, but we were close to the steps, and, before she could reply, Bob had taken off his straw hat to Mrs. Lascelles and flung me a nod.

"How very energetic!" he cried. "I only hope it's a true indication of form, for I've got a scheme. Instead of putting in another chapel, I propose we stroll down to Zermatt for lunch, and come back by the train!"

Bob's proposal was made pointedly to Mrs. Lascelles, and, as pointedly, ex-

cluded me, but she stood between the two of us, with a charming smile of good-humored perplexity.

"Now, what am I to say? Captain Clephane was in the very act of making the same suggestion!"

Bob glared on me for an instant, in spite of Eton and all his ancestors.

"We'll all go together!" I cried, before he could speak. "Why not?"

Nor was this mere unreasoning or good-natured impulse, since Bob could scarcely have pressed his suit in my presence, while I should certainly have done my best to retard it; still, it was rather a relief to me to see him shake his head, with some return of his natural grace.

"My idea was to show Mrs. Lascelles the gorge," said Bob, "but you can do that as well as I can; you can't miss it; besides, I've seen it, and I really ought to stay up here, as a matter of fact, for I'm on the track of a guide for the Matterhorn."

We looked at him, narrowly, with one accord, but he betrayed no signs of desperate impulse, only those of "climbing fever," and I, at least, breathed again.

"But, if you want a guide," I added, "Zermatt's full of them."

"I know," said he, "but it's a particular swell I'm after, and he hangs out up here in the season. They expect him back from a big trip any moment, and I really ought to be on the spot to snap him up."

So Bob retired, in very fair order, after all, and not without his laughing apologies to Mrs. Lascelles; but it was sad to me to note the spurious ring his laugh had now. It was like the death-knell of the simple and the single heart that it had been my lot, if not my mission, to poison and to warp. But I have said enough about my odious task, and will pass on rapidly to its fulfillment, which now seemed close at hand.

It was not, in fact, so imminent as I supposed, for the descent into Zermatt is somewhat too steep for the conduct of a necessarily delicate debate. Sound legs go down at a compulsory run, and my companion was continually waiting

for me to catch up with her, only to shoot ahead again, perforce. Or the path was too narrow for us to walk abreast, and you cannot become confidential in single file; or the noise of falling waters drowned our voices, when we stood together on that precarious platform in the cool depths of the gorge; otherwise, such an admirable setting for the scene that I foresaw. Then, it was a beautiful walk in itself, with its short tacks in the precipitous pine woods above, its sudden plunge into the sunken gorge below, its final sweep across the green valley beyond, and it was all so new to us both that there were impressions to exchange or to compare at every turn. In fine, with all the will in the world, it was quite impossible to get in a word about Bob before luncheon at the Monte Rosa; and, by that time, I, for one, was in no mood to introduce so difficult a topic.

But an opportunity there came, an opportunity such as even I could not neglect; on the contrary, I made too much of it, as the sequel will show. It was in the little museum, which every tourist goes to see. We had shuddered over the grewsome relics of the first and worst catastrophe on the Matterhorn, and were looking in silence upon the primitive portraits of the two younger Englishmen that lost their lives on that historic occasion. They had both been of about the same age as Bob Evers, and I pointed this out to my companion. It was a particularly obvious remark to make, but Mrs. Lascelles turned her face quickly to mine, and the color left it, in the half-lit, half-haunted little room, which we happened to have all to ourselves.

"Don't let him go up, Captain Clephane; don't let him, please!"

"Do you mean Bob Evers?" I asked, to gain time while I considered what to say, for the intensity of her manner was quite a surprise to me.

"You know I do," said Mrs. Lascelles, impatiently; "don't let him go up the Matterhorn to-night, or to-morrow morning, or whenever it is that he means to start."

"But, my dear Mrs. Lascelles, who

am I, to prevent that young gentleman from doing what he likes?"

"I thought you were more or less related?"

"Rather less than more."

"But, aren't you very intimate with his mother?"

I had to meet a very penetrating look. "I was once."

"Well, then, for his mother's sake, you ought to do your best to keep him out of danger, Captain Clephane."

It was my turn to repay the look which I had just received. No doubt I did so with only too much interest; no doubt I was equally clumsy of speech; but it was my opportunity, and something or other must be said.

"Quite so, Mrs. Lascelles! And, for his mother's sake," said I, "I not only will do—I have already done—my best to keep the lad out of harm's way. He is the apple of her eye; they are simply all the world to each other. It would break her heart if anything happened to him—*anything*—if she were to lose him, in any sense of the word!"

I waited a moment, thinking she would speak, prepared, on my side, to be as explicit as she pleased; but Mrs. Lascelles only looked at me, with her mouth tight shut and her eyes wide open; and I concluded, somewhat uneasily, I will confess, that she saw for herself what I meant.

"As for the Matterhorn," I went on, "that, I believe, is not such a very dangerous exploit in these days. There are permanent chains and things where there used to be polished precipices. It makes the real mountaineers rather scornful; any one with legs and a head, they will tell you, can climb the Matterhorn nowadays. If I had the legs, I'd go with him, like a shot."

"To share the danger, I suppose?"

"And the sport."

"Ah," said Mrs. Lascelles, "and the sport, of course! I had forgotten that!"

Yet I did not perceive that I had been found out, for nothing was further from my mind than to continue the hint to which I had stooped in passing a few moments before. It had served its purpose, I conceived. I had given my

veiled warning; it never occurred to me that Mrs. Lascelles might be indulging in a veiled retort. I thought she was annoyed at the hint that I had given her. I began to repent of it myself. It had quite spoiled our day, and so many and long were the silences, as we wandered from little shop to little shop, and finally with relief to the train, that I had plenty of time to remember how much we had found to talk about all the morning.

But matters were coming to a head in spite of me, for Bob Evers waylaid us on our return, and, with hardly a word to Mrs. Lascelles, straightway followed me to my room. He was pale, with a suppressed anger, which flared up even as he closed my door behind him, but though his honest face was now in flames, he still kept control of his tongue.

"I want you to lend me one of those sticks of yours," he said, quietly; "the heaviest, for choice!"

"What the devil for?" I demanded, thinking, for the moment, of no shoulders but my own.

"To give that boulder Quinby the licking he deserves!" cried Bob. "To give it him now, at once, when the post comes in, and the place is full of people to see. Do you know what he's been saying and spreading about the place?"

"No," I answered, my heart sinking within me. "What has he been saying?"

The color altered on Bob's face, altered and softened to a veritable blush, and his eyes avoided mine.

"I'm ashamed to tell you, it makes me so sick," he said, disgustedly. "He's been spreading a report about Mrs. Lascelles. It has nothing on earth to do with me. He only heard it himself this morning, by letter, but the brute has made good use of his time! I got wind of it only an hour or two ago, quite by accident, and I haven't seen the fellow since; but, either he explains himself to my satisfaction, or I make an example of him before the hotel. It's a thing I never dreamt of doing in my life, and I'm sorry the poor beast is such a scarecrow, but it's a duty to punish that sort of crime against a woman, and now I'm

sure you'll lend me one of your sticks. I am only sorry I didn't bring one with me."

"But wait a bit, my dear fellow," said I, for he was actually holding out his hand. "You have still to tell me what the report was."

"Divorce!" he answered, in a tragic voice. "Clephane, the fellow says she was divorced in India, and that it was—that it was her fault!"

He turned away his face. It was in a flame.

"And you are going to thrash Quinby for saying that?"

"If he sticks to it, I most certainly am!" said Bob, the fire settling in his blue eyes.

"I should think twice about it, Bob, if I were you!"

"My dear man, what else do you suppose I have been thinking of all the afternoon?"

"It will make a fresh scandal, you see."

"I can't help that."

Bob shut his mouth, with a self-willed snap.

"But what good will it do?"

"A liar will be punished; that's all! It's no use talking, Clephane; my mind is made up."

"But, are you so sure that it's a lie?" I was obliged to say at last, reluctantly enough, yet with a wretched feeling that I might just as well have said it in the beginning.

"Sure?" he echoed, his innocent eyes widening before mine. "Why, of course, I'm sure! You don't know what friends we've been; she's told me lots of things. She never would have hidden that!"

Then I told him that it was true, and how I knew that it was true, and my reason for having kept all that knowledge to myself until now. "I could not give her away, even to you, Bob, nor yet tell you that I had known her before, for you would have been certain to ask when, and how; and it was in her first husband's time, and under his name."

It was a comfort to be quite honest for once with one of them, and it is a relief even now to remember that I was

absolutely honest with Bob Evers about this. He said, almost at once, that he would have done the same himself, and, even as he spoke, his whole manner changed toward me. His face had darkened at my unexpected confirmation of the odious rumor, but already it was beginning to lighten toward me, as if my attitude was the one redeeming feature in the new aspect of affairs. He even thanked me for my late reserve, as if a kindness to Mrs. Lascelles was already the greatest possible kindness to him.

"But I am glad you have told me now," he added, "for it explains many things. I was inclined to look upon you, Clephane—you won't mind my telling you now—as something of a deliberate interloper! But all the time you knew her first, and that alters everything. I hope to beat you out yet, but I shan't any longer bear you a grudge if you beat me out!"

I was horrified.

"My dear fellow," I cried, "do you mean to say this makes no difference?"

"It does to Quinby. I must keep my hands off him, I suppose, though, to my mind, he deserves his licking all the more."

"But does it make no difference to you? My dear boy, at your age, can you seriously think of marrying a woman married twice already, and once divorced?"

"I didn't know that when I thought of it first," he answered, doggedly, "and I am not going to let it make a difference now. Do you suppose I would stand away from her because of anything that's past and over? Do they stand away from us for—that sort of thing?"

Of course, I said that was rather different, as if there could not be two opinions on the point.

"But, Duncan, you know it's the very last thing you're dreaming of doing yourself!"

And again I argued, as feebly as you please, that it was quite different in my case, that I was a good ten years older than he, and not the only son of my mother.

Bob stiffened on the spot.

"My mother must take care of herself," said he; "and I," he added, "I must take care of myself, if you don't mind. I hope you won't, for you've been most awfully good to me, you know! I never thought so until these last few minutes, but now I shan't forget it, no matter how it all turns out!"

IX.

Well, I made a belated attempt to earn my young friend's good opinion. I kept out of his way after dinner, and went in search of Quinby, instead. I felt I had a crow of my own to pluck with this gentleman, who owed to my timely intervention a far greater immunity than he deserved. It was in the little billiard-room I found him, pachydermately applauding the creditable attempts of Sir John Sankey at the cannon game, and as studiously ignoring the excellent shots of an undistinguished clergyman who was beating the judge. Quinby made room for me beside him, with a civility which might have caused me some compunction, but I repaid him by coming promptly to my point.

"What's this report about Mrs. Lascelles?" I asked, not angrily at all, but with a certain contemptuous interest, if a man can judge of his own outward manner from his inner temper at the time.

Quinby favored me with a narrow, though a sidelong, look: the room was very full, and in the general chit-chat, punctuated by the constant clicking of the heavy balls, there was very little danger of our being overheard. But Quinby was careful to lower his voice.

"It's perfectly true," said he, "if you mean about her being divorced."

"Yes, that was what I heard; but who started the report?"

"Who started it? You may well ask! Who starts anything, in a place like this? Ah, good shot, Sir John; good shot!"

"Never mind the good shots, Quinby. I really want to talk to you about this. I shan't keep you long."

"Talk away, then. I am listening."

"Mrs. Lascelles and I are rather friends."

"So I can see."

"Very well, then. I want to know who started all this. It may be perfectly true, as you say, but who found it out? If you can't tell me, I must ask somebody else."

The ruddy, Alpine coloring had suddenly become accentuated in the case of Quinby.

"As a matter of fact," said he, "it was I who first heard it, quite by chance. You can't blame me for that, Clephane."

"Of course not," said I, encouragingly.

"Well, unfortunately, I let it out; and you know how things get about in an hotel."

"It was unfortunate," I agreed. "But how on earth did you come to hear?"

Quinby hummed and hawed; he had heard from a soldier friend, a man that had known her in India, a man I knew myself; in fact, the very sapper that had telegraphed to Quinby to secure my room for me. I ought to have been disarmed by the coincidence, but I recalled our initial conversation, about India and that sapper and Mrs. Lascelles, and I could not consider it a coincidence at all.

"You don't mean to tell me," said I, aping the surprise I might have felt, "that our friend wrote and gave poor Mrs. Lascelles away to you of his own accord?"

But Quinby did not vouchsafe an answer. "Hard luck, Sir John!" cried he, as the judge missed an easy cannon, leaving his opponent a still easier one, which lost him the game. I proceeded to press my question, in a somewhat stronger form, though still with all the suavity at my command.

"Surely," I urged, "you must have written to ask him about her first?"

"That's my business, I fancy," said Quinby, with a peculiarly aggressive specimen of his nasal snigger.

"Quite," I agreed; "but do you really consider it your business also to inquire deliberately into the past life of a lady whom you know only by sight, and to spread the result of your inquiries broadcast in the hotel? Is that your

idea of chivalry? I shall ask Sir John Sankey whether it is his," I added, as the judge joined us, with genial condescension, and I recollected that his proverbial harshness toward the male offender was redeemed by an extraordinary sympathy with the women. Thereupon, I laid a general case before Sir John, asking him point-blank whether he considered such conduct as Quinby's (I did not say whose conduct) either justifiable in itself or conducive to the enjoyment of a holiday community like ours.

"It depends," said the judge, cocking a critical eye on the now furious Quinby. "I am afraid we most of us enjoy our scandal, and, for my part, I always like to see a humbug catch it hot. But, if the scandal's about a woman, and if it's an old scandal, and if she's a lonely woman, that quite alters the case, and, in my opinion, the author of it deserves all he gets."

At this, Quinby burst out, with an unrestrained heat that did not lower him in my estimation, though the whole of his tirade was directed exclusively against me. I had been talking "at him," he declared. I might as well have been straightforward while I was about it. He was not afraid to take the responsibility for anything he might have said. It was perfectly true, to begin with. The so-called Mrs. Lascelles, who was such a friend of mine, had been the wife of a German Jew in Lahore, who had divorced her on her elopement with a Major Lascelles, whom she had left, in his turn, and whose name she had not the smallest right to bear. Quinby exercised some restraint in the utterance of these calumnies, or the whole room must have heard them, but, even as it was, we had more listeners than the judge when my turn came.

"I won't give you the lie, Quinby, because I am quite sure you don't know you are telling one," said I; "but, as a matter of fact, you are giving currency to two. In the first place, this lady is Mrs. Lascelles, for the major did marry her; in the second place, Major Lascelles is dead."

"And how do you know?" inquired

Quinby, with a touch of genuine surprise to mitigate an insolent disbelief.

"You forget," said I, "that it was in India I knew your own informant. I can only say that my information in all this matter is a good deal better than his. I knew Mrs. Lascelles also quite well out there! I knew the other side of her case. It doesn't seem to have struck you, Quinby, that such a woman must have suffered a good deal before and after taking such a step. Or I don't suppose you would have spread yourself to make her suffer a little more."

I still consider that a charitable view of his behavior, but Quinby was of another opinion, which he expressed, with his offensive little laugh, as he lifted his long body from the settee.

"That is what one gets for securing a room for a man one doesn't know!" said he.

"On the contrary," I retorted, "I haven't forgotten that, and I have saved you something because of it. I have saved you no less than a thrashing from a stronger man than myself, who is even more indignant with you than I am, and who wanted to borrow one of my sticks for the purpose!"

"And it would have served him perfectly right," was the old judge's comment, when the mischiefmaker had departed, without returning my Parthian shot. "I suppose you meant young Evers, Captain Clephane?"

"I did, indeed, Sir John. I had to tell him the truth in order to restrain him."

The old judge raised his eyebrows.

"Then you hadn't to tell him it before? You are certainly consistent, and I much admire your position as regards the lady. But I am not so sure that it was altogether fair toward the lad. It is one thing to stand up for the poor soul, my dear sir, but it would be another thing to let a nice boy like that go and marry her!"

So that was the opinion of this ripe, old citizen of the world! It ought not to have irritated me as it did. It would be Catherine's opinion, of course; but a dispassionate view was not to be expected from her. I had not hitherto

thought otherwise myself, but now I experienced a perverse inclination to take the opposite side. Was it so utterly impossible for a woman with this woman's record to make a good wife to some man yet? I did not admit it for an instant; he would be a lucky man who won so healthy and so good a heart; thus I argued to myself, with Mrs. Lascelles in my mind, and nobody else. But Bob Evers was not a man. I was not sure that he was out of his teens, and to think of him was to think at once with Sir John Sankey and all the rest. Yes, yes, it would be madness and suicide in such a youth; there could be no two opinions about that. And yet I felt indignant at the mildest expression of that which I myself could not deny.

Such was my somewhat chaotic state of mind when I had fled the billiard-room, in my turn, and put on my overcoat and cap to commune with myself outside. Nobody did justice to Mrs. Lascelles. It was terribly hard to do her justice. I did not see how I was to be the exception and prove the rule. My brief was for Bob, and there was an end of it. It was foolish to worry, especially on such a night.

The moon had waxed since my arrival, and now hung almost round and altogether dazzling in the little sky the mountains left us. Yet I had the terrace all to myself; the magnificent voice of our latest celebrity had drawn everybody else indoors, or under the open drawing-room windows, through which it poured out into the glorious night. And, in the vivid moonlight, the mountains seemed to have gathered very close about the little human hive upon their heights, to be even listening to the grand, rich notes that had some right to break their own grand silence.

"Though poor be the chamber,
Come here, here and adore,
Where the Lord of Heaven
Hath to mortals given
Life for evermore."

So sang the splendid voice, to that fine refrain of which the words gave no inkling, and I was standing entranced myself, an outpost of the audience, un-

derneath the windows, whose fringe I could just see round the farthest angle of the hotel, when Bob Evers ran down the steps and came toward me, in such a guise that I could not swear to him till the last yard.

"Don't say a word," he whispered, excitedly. "I'm just off!"

"Off where?" I gasped, for he had changed into full mountaineering garb, and there was his greased face beaming in the moonlight, and the blue spectacles twinkling about his hatband, at half-past nine at night!

"Up the Matterhorn!"

"At this time of night?"

"It is late, and that's why I want it kept quiet. I don't want any fuss or advice. I've got a couple of excellent guides waiting for me just below by the shoemaker's hut. I told you I was on their track. Well, it was to-night or never, as far as they were concerned, they are so tremendously full up. So to-night it is."

"But I thought everybody went up to the *Cabane* over night, and started fresh from there in the morning."

"Most people do, but it's as broad as it's long," declared Bob, airily, rapidly, and with the same unwonted excitement, born, as I thought, of his unwonted enterprise. "You have a ripping moonlight walk, instead of a so-called night's rest in a frowsy hut. We shall get our breakfast there instead, and I expect to start fresher than if I had slept there, and been wakened at two o'clock in the morning. That's all settled, anyhow, and you can look for me on top through the telescope after breakfast. I shall be back before dark, and then——"

"Well, what then?" I asked, for Bob had made a significant and yet irresolute pause, as if he could not quite bring himself to tell me something that was on his mind.

"Well," he echoed, nonchalantly, at last, "as a matter of fact, to-morrow night I am to know my fate. I have asked Mrs. Lascelles to marry me, and she hasn't said no, but I am giving her till to-morrow night. That's all, Clephane. I thought it a fair thing to let you know. If you want to waltz in and

try your luck while I'm gone, there's nothing on earth to prevent you, and it might be most satisfactory to everybody. As a matter of fact, I'm only going so as to get over the time and keep out of the way; of course, I meant to rush the Matterhorn while I am here, but, between ourselves, that's my only reason for rushing it to-night."

I wondered whether it was his only reason. Had he no boyish vision of quick promotion in the lady's heart, no primitive desire to show his mettle out of hand, to set her trembling while he did or died? He had, I thought, and he had not; that shining face could only have reflected a single and a candid heart. But it is these very natures, so simple and sweet-hearted, and transparent, that are least to be trusted on the subject of their own motives and emotions, for they are the soonest deceived, not only by others, but in themselves. Or, so I think, and even then reflected, as I shook this dear lad's hand by the side parapet of the moonlit terrace and watched him run down into the shadows of the fir trees, and so out of my sight, with two dark and stalwart figures that detached themselves from the shadows of the shoemaker's hut. A third figure mounted to where I stood, listening to the easy, swinging, confident steps, as they fell fainter and fainter upon the ear: it was the shoemaker himself that had shod my two sticks with spikes and my boots with formidable nails. We exchanged a few words.

"Do you know those two guides?" I asked.

"Very well, monsieur."

"Are they good guides?"

"The very best, monsieur."

X.

"Is that you?"

It was an hour or so later, but still I sat ruminating upon the parapet, within a yard or two of the spot where I had first accosted Bob Evers and Mrs. Lascelles. I had retraced the little sequence of events, paltry enough in themselves, yet of a certain symmetry and no

slight importance as a whole. I had attacked and defended my own conduct down to that hour, and, during my unprofitable deliberations, the night had aged and altered, as it were, behind my back. There was no more music in the drawing-room. There were no more people under the drawing-room windows. The lights in all the lower windows were not what they had been; it was the bedroom tiers that were illuminated now. But I did not realize that there was less light outside, until I awoke to the fact that Mrs. Lascelles was peering tentatively toward me and putting her question in a very uncertain tone.

"That depends on who I am supposed to be," I answered, laughing, as I rose to put my personality beyond doubt.

"How stupid of me!" nervously laughed Mrs. Lascelles, in her turn. "I thought it was Mr. Evers!"

I had hard work to suppress an exclamation. So he had not told her what he was going to do, although he had not forbidden me to tell her! Poor Bob was more subtle than I had supposed, but it was a simple subtlety, a strange chord, but still in key with his character as I knew it.

"I am sorry to disappoint you," said I. "But I am afraid you won't see any more of Bob Evers to-night."

"What do you mean?" asked Mrs. Lascelles, suspiciously.

"I wonder he didn't tell you," said I, to gain time in which to decide how to make the best use of such an unforeseen opportunity.

"Well, he didn't; so, please, will you, Captain Clephane?"

"Bob Evers," said I, with befitting gravity, "is climbing the Matterhorn at this moment."

"Never!"

"At least, he has started."

"When did he start?"

"An hour or more ago, with a couple of guides."

"He told you, then?"

"Only just as he was starting."

"Was it a sudden idea?"

"More or less, I think."

I waited for the next question, but that was the last. Just then the interloping cloud floated clear of the moon, and I saw that my companion was wrapped up as on the earlier night, in the same unconventional combination of rain-coat and golf cape; but now the hood hung down, and the sudden rush of moonlight showed me a face as full of sheer perplexity and annoyance as I could have hoped to find it, and as free from deeper feeling.

"The silly boy!" exclaimed Mrs. Lascelles, at last. "I suppose it really is pretty safe, Captain Clephane?"

"Safer than most dangerous things, I believe; and they are the safest, as you know, because you take most care. He has a couple of excellent guides; the chance of getting them was partly why he went. In all human probability we shall have him back safe and sound, and frightfully pleased with himself, long before this time to-morrow. Meanwhile, Mrs. Lascelles," I continued, with the courage of my opportunity, "it is a very good chance for me to speak to you about our friend Bob. I have wanted to do so for some little time."

"Have you, indeed?" said Mrs. Lascelles, coldly.

"I have," I answered, imperturbably, "and if it wasn't so late I should ask for a hearing now."

"Oh, let us get it over, by all means."

But as she spoke Mrs. Lascelles glanced over the shoulder that she shrugged so contemptuously, toward the lights in the bedroom windows, most of which were wide open.

"We could walk toward the zigzags," I suggested. "There is a seat within a hundred yards, if you don't think it too cold to sit; but, in any case, I needn't keep you many minutes. Bob Evers," I continued, "paid me the compliment of confiding in me somewhat freely before he started on this hare-brained expedition of his."

"So it appears."

"Ah! but he didn't only tell me what he was going to do; he told me why he was doing it," said I, as we sauntered on our way side by side. "It was difficult to believe," I added, when I had

waited long enough for the question upon which I had reckoned.

"Indeed?"

"He said he had proposed to you."

I waited, but never a word.

"That child!" I added, with deliberate scorn.

But a further pause was broken only by my companion's measured steps and my own awkward shuffle.

"That baby!" I insisted.

"Did you tell him he was one, Captain Clephane?" asked Mrs. Lascelles, dryly, but drawn at last.

"I spared his feelings. But can it be true, Mrs. Lascelles?"

"It is true."

"And is it a fact that you didn't give him a definite answer?"

"I don't know what business it is of yours," said Mrs. Lascelles, bluntly; "and, since he seems to have told you everything, neither do I know why you should ask me. However, it is quite true that I did not finally refuse him on the spot."

This carefully qualified confirmation should have afforded me abundant satisfaction. I was over-eager in the matter, however, and I cried out, impetuously:

"But you will?"

"Will what?"

"Refuse the boy!"

We had reached the seat, but neither of us sat down. Mrs. Lascelles appeared to be surveying me with equal resentment and defiance. I, having shot my bolt, did my best to look conciliatory.

"Why should I refuse him?" she asked, at length, with less emotion and more dignity than her bearing had led me to expect. "You seem so sure about it!"

"He is such a boy—such an utter child—as I said just now." I was conscious of the weakness of saying it again and it alone, but my strongest arguments were too strong for direct statement.

This one, however, was not unfruitful in the end.

"And I," said Mrs. Lascelles, "how old do you think I am? Thirty-five?"

"Of course not," said I, with obvious

gallantry. "But I doubt if Bob is even twenty."

"Well, then, you won't believe me, but I was married before I was his age, and I am just six-and-twenty now!"

It was a surprise to me. I did not doubt it for a moment; one never did doubt Mrs. Lascelles. It was easy enough to believe (so much I told her), if one looked upon the woman as she was, and only difficult in the prejudicial light of her matrimonial record. I did not add that. "But you are a good deal older," I could not help saying, "in the ways of the world, and it is there that Bob is such an infant."

"But I thought an Eton boy was a man of the world?" said Mrs. Lascelles, quoting me against myself with the utmost readiness.

"Ah! in some things," I had to concede. "Only in some things, however."

"Well," she rejoined, "of course I know what you mean by the other things. They matter to your mind much more than mere age, even if I had been fifteen years older, instead of five or six. It's the old story, from the man's point of view. You can live anything down, but you won't let us. There is no fresh start for a woman; there never was, and never will be."

I protested that this was unfair. "I never said that or anything like it, Mrs. Lascelles!"

"No, you don't say it, but you think it!" she cried back. "It is the one thing you have in your mind. I was unhappy, I did wrong, so I can never be happy. I can never do right! I am unfit to marry again, to marry a good man, even if he loves me, even if I love him!"

"I neither say nor think anything of the kind," I reiterated, and with some slight effect this time. Mrs. Lascelles put no more absurdities into my mouth.

"Then what do you say?" she demanded, her deep voice vibrant with scornful indignation, though there were tears in it, too.

"I think he will be a lucky fellow that gets you," I said, and meant every word, as I looked at her well in the moonlight, with her shining eyes and curling lip and fighting flush.

"Thank you, Captain Clephane!"

And I thought I was to be honored with a contemptuous courtesy; but I was not.

"He ought to be a man, however," I went on, "and not a boy, and, still less, the only child of a woman with whom you would never get on!"

"So you are as sure of that," exclaimed Mrs. Lascelles, "as of everything else!" It seemed, however, to soften her, or, at least, to change the current of her thoughts. "Yet you get on with her?" she added, with a wistful intonation.

I could not deny that I got on with Catherine Evers.

"You are even fond of her?"

"Quite fond."

"Then do you find me such a disagreeable person that she and I couldn't possibly hit it off, in your opinion?"

"It isn't that, Mrs. Lascelles," said I, almost wearily. "You must know what it is. You want to marry her son——"

Mrs. Lascelles smiled.

"Well, let us suppose you do. That would be quite enough for Lady Catherine. No matter who you were, or how beautiful, how incomparable in every way, she had rather die than let you marry him at his age. I don't say she's wrong—I don't say she's right. I give you the plain fact for what it is worth: you would find her from the first a clever and determined adversary, a regular little lioness with her cub, and absolutely intolerant on that particular point."

I could see Catherine as I spoke, but the vision faded before the moonlit reality of Mrs. Lascelles, laughing to herself like a great, naughty, pretty child.

"I really think I must marry him," she said, "and see what happens!"

"If you do," I answered, in all seriousness, "you will begin by separating mother and son, and end by making both their lives miserable, and bringing the last misery into your own."

Either my tone impressed her, or the covert reminder in my last words; for the bold smile faded from her face, and she looked longer and more search-

ingly into mine than she had done as yet.

"You know Mrs. Evers exceedingly well," Mrs. Lascelles remarked.

"I did, years ago," I guardedly replied.

"Do you mean to say you have not seen her for years?"

I did not altogether like her tone. Yet, it was so downright and straightforward, it was hard to be the very reverse in answer to it, and I shied idiotically at the honest lie. I had quite lost sight both of Bob and his mother, I declared, from the day I went to India until now.

"You mean until you came out here?" persisted Mrs. Lascelles.

"Until the other day," I said, relying on a carefully affirmative tone to close the subject. There was a pause. I began to hope I had succeeded.

"I believe," said Mrs. Lascelles, "that you saw Mrs. Evers in town before you started."

It was too late to lie.

"As a matter of fact," I answered, easily, "I did."

I built no hopes on the pause which followed that. Somehow, I had my face to the moon, and Mrs. Lascelles had her back. I knew her scrutiny of me was more critical than ever.

"How funny of Bob never to have told me!" she said.

"Told you what?"

"That you saw his mother just before you left."

"I didn't tell him," I said, at length.

"That was funny of you, Captain Clephane."

"On the contrary," I argued, with the impudence which was now my only chance, "it was only natural. Bob was rather raw with his friend Kennerley, you see. You knew about that?"

"Oh, yes."

"And why they fell out?"

"Yes."

"Well, he might have thought the other fellow had been telling tales, and that I had come out to have an eye on him, if he had known that I happened to see his mother just before I started."

There was another pause; but now I

was committed to an attitude and prepared for the worst.

"Perhaps there would have been some truth in it?" suggested Mrs. Lascelles.

"Perhaps," I agreed, "a little."

The pause now was the longest of all. It had no terrors for me. Another cloud had come between us and the moon. I was sorry for that. I felt that I was missing something. Even the fine upstanding figure before me was no longer sharp enough to be expressive.

"I have been harking back," explained Mrs. Lascelles, eventually. "Now I think I follow perfectly. You saw his mother, you heard a report, and you volunteered, or, at least, consented to come out and keep an eye on the dear boy, as you say yourself. Am I not more or less right so far, Captain Clephane?"

Her tone was frozen honey.

"More or less," I was forced to admit.

"Of course, I don't know what report that miserable young man may have carried home with him. I don't want to know. But I can guess. One does not stay in hotel after hotel without getting a pretty shrewd idea of the way people talk about one. I know the sort of things they have been saying here. You would hear them for yourself, no doubt, Captain Clephane, as soon as you arrived!"

I admitted that I had, but reminded Mrs. Lascelles that the first person I had spoken to was also the greatest gossip in the hotel. She paid no attention to the remark, but stood looking at me again, with the look that I could never quite see to read.

"And then," she went on, "you found out who it was, and you remembered all about me, and your worst fears were confirmed. That must have been an interesting moment. I wonder how you felt. . . . Did it never occur to you to speak plainly to anybody?"

"I wasn't going to give you away," I said, stolidly, though with no conscious parade of virtue.

"Yet, you see, it would have made no difference if you had. Did you seriously think it would make much difference,

Captain Clephane, to a really chivalrous young man?" I bowed my head to the well-earned taunt. "But," she went on, "there was no need for you to speak to Mr. Evers. You might have spoken to me. Why did you not do that?"

"Because I didn't want to quarrel with you," I answered, quite honestly; "because I enjoyed your society too much myself."

"That was very nice of you," said Mrs. Lascelles, with a sudden, although a subtle, return of the good nature which had always attracted me. "If it is sincere," she added, as an apparent afterthought.

"I am perfectly sincere now."

"Then what do you think I should do?" she asked me, in the soft, new tone, which actually flattered me with the idea that she was making up her mind to take my advice.

"Refuse this lad!"

"And then?" she almost whispered.

"And then——"

I hesitated. I found it hard to say what I thought, hard even upon myself. We had been good friends. I admired the woman cordially; her society was pleasant to me, as it always had been. Nevertheless, we had just engaged in a duel of no friendly character, and now, that we seemed of a sudden to have become friends again, it was the harder to give her the only advice that I considered compatible alike with my duty and the varied demands of the situation. If she took it, as she seemed disposed to do, the immediate loss would be mine, and I foresaw, besides, a much more disagreeable reckoning with Bob Evers than the one now approaching an amicable conclusion. I should have to stay behind to face the music of his wrath alone. Still, at the risk of appearing brutal, I made my proposal in plain terms; but, to minimize that risk, I ventured to take the lady's hand, and was glad to find the familiarity permitted in the same friendly spirit in which it was indulged.

"I would have no 'and then,' if I were you," I said. "I should refuse him under such circumstances that he couldn't possibly bother you or himself

about you again. Now is your opportunity."

"Is it?" she asked, still in a whisper, as I paused. I fancied there was a tremor in the firm, warm hand in mine.

"The best of opportunities," I replied, "if you are not too wedded to this place and can tear yourself away from the rest of us." (Her hand lay loose in mine.) "Mrs. Lascelles, I should go away to-morrow morning," (her hand fell away altogether), "while he is still up the Matterhorn. And I shouldn't let him know where. I shouldn't give him a chance of finding out—"

A sudden peal of laughter cut me short. I could not have believed it came from my companion. But no other soul was near us, though I looked all ways. It was the merriest laughter imaginable, only the merriment was harsh and hard.

"Oh, thank you, Captain Clephane! You are too delicious! I saw it coming; I only wondered whether I could contain myself until it came. Yet, I could hardly believe that even you would commit yourself to that finishing touch of impudence! Certainly, it is an opportunity, his being out of the way. You were not long in making use of it, were you? It will amuse him when he comes down, though it may open his eyes. I shall tell him everything, I give you warning. Every single thing that you have had the insolence to tell me!"

She had caught up her skirts from the ground, she had half turned away from me, toward the hotel. The false merriment had died out of her voice. The true indignation remained, ringing in every accent of her honest voice, and drawn up in every inch of the tall, straight figure. I do not remember whether the moon was hid or shining at the moment. I only know that my lady's eyes shone bright enough for me to see them then and ever after, bright and dry with a scorn that burned too hot for tears; and that I admired her even while she scorned me, as I had never thought to admire any woman but one, but this woman best of all.

We both stood intent, some seconds, looking our last upon each other, if I

was wise. Then I lifted my hat, and offered my congratulations, more sincere than they sounded, to her and to Bob.

"Did I tell you why he is going up?" I added. "It is to pass the time until he knows his fate. If only we could let him know it now!"

Mrs. Lascelles glanced toward the mountain, and my eyes followed hers. A great cloud hid the grim outstanding summit.

"If only you had prevented him from going!" she cried back at me, in a last reproach; and to me her tone was conclusive, as she turned. I followed her very slowly and without a word, for now was I utterly and deservedly undone.

XI.

It was a chilly morning, with rather a high wind. From the haze about the mountains of the Zermatt valley, all that I could see from my bedroom window, it occurred to me that I might look in vain for the Matterhorn from the other side of the hotel. It was still visible, however, when I came down, a white cloud wound about its middle like a cloth, and the hotel telescope already trained upon its summit from the shelter of the glass veranda.

"See anybody?" I asked of a man that sat at the telescope as if his eye was frozen to the lens. He might have been witnessing the most exciting adventure, where the naked eye saw only rock and snow and cold gray sky; but he rose at last, with a shake of the head, a great, gaunt man, with kind, keen eyes and the skin peeled off his nose.

"No," said he, "I can't see anybody, and I'm very glad I can't. It's about as bad a morning for it as you could possibly have; yet, last night was so fine that some fellows might have got up to the hut, and been foolish enough not to come down again. But have a look for yourself."

"Oh, thanks," said I, considerably relieved at what I heard, "but if you can't see anybody I'm sure I can't. You have done it yourself, I dare say?"

The gaunt man smiled demurely and the keen eyes twinkled in his flayed face. He was, indeed, a palpable mountaineer!

"What! The Matterhorn?" said he, lowering his voice and looking about him as if on the point of some discreditable admission. "Oh, yes, I've done the Matterhorn; back and front and both sides, with and without guides; but everybody has in these days. It's nothing when you know the ropes and chains and things. They've got everything up there now except an iron staircase. Still, I should be sorry to tackle it to-day, even if they had a lift!"

"Do you think guides would?" I asked, less reassured than I had felt at first.

"It depends on the guides. They are not the first to turn back, as a rule; but they like wind and mist even less than we do. The guides know what they mean."

I now understood the special disadvantages of the day and realized the obvious dangers. I could only hope that either Bob Evers or his guides had shown the one kind of courage required by the occasion, the moral courage of turning back. But I was not at all sure of Bob. His stimulus was not of the single-minded, level-headed mountaineer; in his romantic exaltation, he was capable of hailing the very perils as so many more means of grace in the sight of Mrs. Lascelles; yet, without doubt, he would have repudiated any such incentive and that in all the sincerity of his simple heart. He did not know himself as I knew him.

My fears were soon confirmed. Returning to the glass veranda, after the stock breakfast of the Swiss hotel, I found the telescope the center of an ominous crowd, on whose fringe hovered my new friend, the mountaineer.

"We were wrong," he muttered to me. "Some fools are up there, after all."

"How many?" I asked, quickly.

"I don't know. There's no getting near the telescope now, and won't be till the clouds blot them out altogether."

I looked out at the Matterhorn. The

loin-cloth of cloud had shaken itself out into a flowing robe, from which only the brown skull of the mountain protruded in its white skullcap.

"There are three of them," announced a nasal voice, from the heart of the little crowd. "A great, long chap and two guides."

"He can't possibly know that," remarked the mountaineer to me, "but let's hope it is so."

"They're as plain as pike-staffs," continued Quinby, whose bent blonde head I now distinguished, as he occupied the congenial post of Sister Anne. "They seem stuck. No, they're getting up on the snow slope, and the front man is cutting steps."

"Then they're all right for the present," said the mountaineer. "It's the getting down that's ticklish."

"You can see the rope between them. . . . What a wind there must be. . . it's bent out taut like a bow. You can see it against the snow, and they're bending themselves more than forty-five degrees to meet it."

"All very well going up," grimly murmured the mountaineer.

I turned into the hall. It was quite deserted. I had hoped I might see something of Mrs. Lascelles; she was not one of those in the glass veranda. I looked into the drawing-room, but neither was she there. Returning to the empty hall, I passed a minute peering through the locked glass door of the pigeonholes in which the careful *concierge* files the unclaimed letters. There was nothing for me in the C pigeonhole; but next box but one, under E, there lay on the very top a letter that caught my eye and more. It had not been through any post. It was a note directed to R. Evers, Esq., in a hand I knew instinctively to be that of Mrs. Lascelles, though I had never seen it in my life before. It was a good hand, large and bold and downright as herself.

The *concierge* stood in the doorway, one eye on the disappearing Matterhorn, one on the experts and others in animated conclave round the still inaccessible telescope. I touched the *concierge* on the arm.

"Did you see Mrs. Lascelles this morning?"

The man's eyes opened before his lips.

"She has gone away, sir."

"I know," I said, having, indeed, divined no less. "What train did she catch?"

"The first one from here. That also catches the early train from Zermatt."

"I am sorry," I said, after a pause. "I hoped to see Mrs. Lascelles before she went; now I must write. She left you an address, I suppose?"

"Oh, yes, sir."

"I shall ask you for it later on. No letters for me, I suppose?"

"No, sir."

"Sure?"

"I will look again."

And I looked with him, over his shoulder; but there was nothing; and the note for Bob Evers now inspired me with a tripartite blend of curiosity, envy and apprehension. I would have had a last word from the same hand myself, had it been ever so scornful. This silent scorn was the hardest sort to bear. Also, I wanted much to know what her last word was to Bob—and dreaded more what it might be.

There remained the unexpected triumph of having got rid of my lady, after all. That is not to be belittled even now. It is a triumph to succeed in any undertaking, more especially when one has abandoned one's own last hope of such success. At least, I had done my part. I had come to hate it, but the thing was done, and it had been a fairly difficult thing to do. It was impossible not to plume one's self a little on the whole, but the feeling was superficial, with deeper and uneasier feelings underneath. Still, I had practically redeemed my impulsive promise to Catherine Evers; her son and this woman once parted, it should be easy to keep them apart, and my knowledge of the woman forbade me to deny the fullest significance to her departure. She had gone away to stay away—from Bob. She had listened to me the less with her ears, because her reason and her heart had

been compelled to heed. She saw the unsuitability, the impossibility, as clearly as we did. But it was I that had helped to make her see it; wherefore, I deserved well of Catherine Evers, if of no other person in the world.

Oddly enough, this last consideration afforded me least satisfaction. It seemed to bring home to me by contrast the poor figure I must assuredly cut in the eyes of the other two, the still poorer opinion they would have of me if ever they knew all. I did not care to pursue this train of thought. It was a subject upon which I was not prepared to examine myself; to change it, I thought of Bob's present peril, which I had almost forgotten as I lounged abstractedly in the empty hall. If anything were to happen to him, in the vulgar sense! What an irony, what poetic punishment for us survivors! And yet, even as I rehearsed the ghastly climax in my mind, I told myself that the mother had rather see him even thus, than married to a widow that had also been divorced; it was the younger woman that would never forgive me—or herself.

Disappointed faces met me on my return to the veranda. The little crowd there had dwindled to a group. I could have had the telescope now for as long as I liked; the upper part of the Matterhorn was finally and utterly effaced and swallowed up by dense white mist and cloud. My friend the mountaineer looked grave, but his disfigured face did not wear the balked expression of others to which he drew my attention.

"It is like the curtain coming down with the man's head still in the lion's mouth," said he.

"I devoutly hope," said I, "that you don't seriously think there's any analogy."

The climber looked at me steadily, and then smiled.

"Well, perhaps I don't think it quite so bad as all that. But it's no use pretending it isn't dangerous. May I ask if you know who the foolhardy fellow is?"

I said I did not know, but mentioned my suspicion, only begging my climbing friend not to let the name go any

further. It was in too many mouths already, in quite another connection, I was going on to explain; but the mountaineer nodded, as much as to warn me that even he knew all about that. It was Bob's fate, however, to provide the hotel with its sensation while he remained, and he was not allowed to perform anonymously very long. His departure over night leaked out. I was asked if it was true. The flight of Mrs. Lascelles was the next discovery; desperate deductions were drawn at once. She had jilted the unlucky youth and sent him in utter recklessness on his intentionally suicidal ascent.

Nobody any longer expected to see him come down alive; so much I gathered from the fragments of conversation that reached my ears; and never was better occupation for a bad day than appeared to be afforded by the discussion of the supposititious tragedy in all its imaginary details. As, however, the talk invariably abated at my approach, giving place to uncomplimentary glances in my direction, I could not but infer that public opinion had assigned me an unenviable part in the piece. Perhaps I deserved it, though not from their point of view.

The afternoon was a dreariness and a dread. There was no ray of sun without, no sort of warmth within. The Matterhorn never reappeared, but seemed the grimmer monster for this sinister invisibility. I gathered that there was real occasion for anxiety, if not alarm, and I nursed mine chiefly in my own room, until I heard the news when I went down for my letters. Bob Evers had walked in as if nothing had happened, and gone straight up to his room with a note the *concierge* handed him. Some one had asked him whether it was he that had been up the Matterhorn in the morning, and young Evers had vouchsafed the barest affirmative compatible with civility. The sunburned climber was my informant.

"I don't mind telling you it is a relief to me," he added, "and to everybody, though I shouldn't wonder if there was a little unconscious disappointment in the air, as well. I congratulate you, for

I could see you were anxious, and I must find an opportunity of congratulating your young friend himself."

Meanwhile, no such opportunity was afforded me, though I quite expected and was fully prepared for another visit from Bob in my room. I waited for him there until dinner time, but he never came. I was beginning to wish he would. It was like the wrapping of the Matterhorn in mist; it only widened the field of apprehension, and yet it was not for me to go to the boy. My unrest was further aggravated by a letter I had just received from the boy's mother in answer to my first to her. It was not a very dreadful letter; but I only trusted that no evil impulse had caused Catherine to write in anything like the same strain to Bob; for neither was it a very charitable letter, nor one a man could be glad to get from the woman he had set on an enduring pinnacle. There was only this to be said for it, that years ago I had sought in vain for a really human weakness in Catherine Evers, and now, at last, I had found one. She was rather too human about Mrs. Lascelles. I looked for Bob both at and after dinner, but we were never within speaking distance, and I fancied he avoided even my eye. What had Mrs. Lascelles said? He looked redder and browner and rougher in the face, but I heard that he would hardly open his lips at table, that he was almost surly on the subject of his exploit. Everybody else appeared to me to be speaking of it, or of Bob himself; but I had him on my nerves, and may well have formed an exaggerated impression about it all. Only, I do not forget some of the things I did overhear that day and night. They now had the effect of sending me in search of Bob, since Bob would not come near me. "I will have it out with him," I grimly decided, "and then get out of this myself by the first train going." I had had quite enough of the place that had enchanted me up to the last four-and-twenty hours. I began to see myself back in Elm Park Gardens. There, at least, if also there alone, I should get some credit for what I had done.

It was no use looking for Bob on the terrace now; yet I did look there, among other obvious places, before I could bring myself to knock at his door. There was a light in his room, so I knew that he was there, and he cried out admittance in so sharp a tone that I fancied he also knew who knocked. I found him in his shirt sleeves, packing. He received me with a stare in exact keeping with his tone. What on earth had Mrs. Lascelles said?

"Going away?" I asked, as a mere preliminary, and shut the door behind me. Bob followed the action with raised eyebrows, then flung me the shortest possible affirmative, as he bent once more over the suit case on the bed.

But in a few seconds he looked up. "Anything I can do for you, Clephane?"

"That depends on where you are going."

Bob went on packing with a smile. I guessed where he was going. "I thought there might be something pressing," he remarked, without looking up again.

"There is," said I. "There is something you can do for me on the spot. You can try to believe that I have not meant to be such a cad as I may have seemed—to you." I had intended saying, but I stopped short of that advisedly, as I thought of Mrs. Lascelles also.

"Oh, that's all right," said Bob, in a would-be airy tone that carried its own contradiction. "All's fair, according to the proverb; I no more blame you than you would have blamed me. I hope, on the contrary, that I may congratulate you?"

And he stood up with a look which, coupled with his words, made it my turn to stare.

"Indeed, you may not," said I.

"Aren't you engaged to her?" he asked.

"Good God, no!" I cried. "What makes you think so?"

"Everything!" exclaimed Bob, after a moment's pause of obvious bewilderment. "I—you see—I had a note from Mrs. Lascelles herself!"

"Yes?" said I, carefully careless, but I wanted more than ever to know that missive's gist.

"Only a few lines," Bob went on, ruefully. "They were the first thing I heard or saw when I got down, and they almost made me wish I'd come down with a run! Well, it's no use talking about it, only I thought you'd know. It was the usual smack in the eye, I suppose, only nicely put, and all that. She didn't tell me where she was going, or why; she told me I had better ask you."

"But you wouldn't condescend."

Bob gave a rather friendly little laugh.

"I said I'd see you damned first," he admitted. "But, of course, I thought you were the lucky man. I still half believe you are!"

"Well, I'm not."

"Do you mean to say that she's refused you, too?"

"She hasn't had the chance."

Bob's eyes opened to an infantile width.

"But you told me you were in earnest!" said he.

"As much in earnest as you were, I believe, was what I said."

"That's the same thing," returned Bob, sharply. "You may not think it is. I don't care what you think. But I'm very sorry you said you were in earnest, if you were not."

His tone convinced me that he was no longer commiserating himself; he was sorry on some new account, and the evident reality of his regret filled me, in turn, with all the qualms of a guilty conscience.

"Why are you sorry?" I demanded.

"Oh, not on my own account," said Bob. "I'm delighted, personally, of course."

"Then, do you mean to say—you actually told her—I was as much in earnest as you were?"

Bob Evers smiled openly in my face; it was the only revenge he ever took; even it was tempered by the inextinguishable sweetness of expression and the childlike, wide-eyed candor which were Bob's even in the hour of his

humiliation, and will be, one hopes, all his days.

"Not in so many words," he said, "but I am afraid I did tell her in effect. You see, I took you at your word. I thought it was quite true. I'm awfully sorry, Duncan. But it really serves you right!"

I made no answer. I was looking at the suit case on the bed. Bob seemed to have lost all interest in his packing. I turned to leave him without a word.

"I am awfully sorry!" he was the one to say again. I began to wonder when he would see all round the point, and how it would affect his feelings (to say nothing of his actions) when he did. Meanwhile, it was Bob who was holding out his hand.

"So am I," I said, taking it.

And, for once, I, also, was not thinking about myself.

XII.

Where had Bob been going, and where was he going now? If these were not the first questions that I asked myself on coming away from him, they were, at all events, among my last thoughts that night, and (as it happened) quite my first next morning. His voice had reached me through my bedroom window, on the head of a dream about himself. I got up and looked out; there was Bob Evers seeing the suit case into the tiny train which brings your baggage (and yourself, if you like) to the very door of the Riffel Alp Hotel. Bob did not ride, and I watched him out of sight down the winding path threaded by the shining rails. He walked slowly, with head and shoulders bent, it might be with dogged resolve, it might be in mere depression; there was never a glimpse of his face, nor a backward glance, as he swung round the final corner, with his greatcoat over his arm.

In spite of my curiosity as to his destination, I made no attempt to discover it for myself, but on consideration I was guilty of certain inquiries concerning that of Mrs. Lascelles. They had not to

be very exhaustive; she had made no secret of her original plans upon leaving the Riffel Alp, and they did not appear to have undergone much change. I left myself that same forenoon, and lay that night amid the smells of Brigues, after a little tour of its hotels, in one of which I found the name of Mrs. Lascelles in the register, while in every one I was prepared to light upon Bob Evers in the flesh. But that encounter did not occur.

In the early morning I was one of a shivering handful awaiting the diligence for the Furka Pass, and an ominous drizzle made me thankful that my telegram of the previous day had been too late to secure me an outside seat. It was quite damp enough within. Nor did the day improve as we drove, or the view attract me in the least. It was at its worst as a sight, and I at mine as a sightseer. I have as little recollection of my fellow-passengers; but I still see the page in the hotel register at the Rhone Glacier, with the name I sought written boldly in its place, just twenty-four hours earlier.

The Furka Pass has its European reputation; it would gain nothing from my enthusiastic praises, had I any enthusiasm to draw upon, or the descriptive powers to do it justice. But what I best remember is the time it took us to climb those interminable zigzags, and to shake off the too tenacious sight of the hotel in the hollow where I had seen a signature and eaten my lunch. In the end we rattled into Andermatt; here was a huge hotel all but empty, with a perfect tome of a visitors' book, and on it, sure enough, the fine, free autograph which I was beginning to know so well.

"Yes, sare," said the *concierge*, "the season end suddenly with the bad vedder at the beginning of the week. You know that lady? She has been here last night; she go away again to-day, on to Göschenen and Zürich. Yes, sare, she will be in Zürich to-night."

I was in Zürich myself the night after. I knew the hotel to go to, knew it from Mrs. Lascelles herself, whose experience of continental hotels was so pathetically extensive. This was the best in Switzer-

land, so she had assured me in one of our talks; but one night of it appeared to be enough, on this occasion, for again I missed her by a few hours. I was annoyed.

The place at which I found myself the following night was called Triberg, in the Black Forest, which I had never penetrated before, and certainly never shall again. It seemed to me an uttermost end of the earth. It was raining when I arrived, and the rain never ceased for an instant while I was there. But it was from Mrs. Lascelles that I had heard of the dismal spot as her ultimate objective after Switzerland. It was the only address with which she had provided the *concierge* at the Riffel Alp. All day I had regretted the night wasted at Zürich, on the chance of saving a day; but I had been sanguine of bringing my dubious quest to a successful issue here in Triberg. When we drove up to as gloomy a hostelry as I have ever beheld, with the blue-black forest smoking wet behind it, I found that here also the foul weather had brought the season to a premature and sudden end, literally emptying this particular hotel.

"Been and gone," said the landlord, grinning sardonically. "Too lonely for the lady. She has arrived last night and gone away again this morning. You will find her at the Darmstaedterhof, in Baden-Baden, unless she changes her mind on the way."

I caught his grin. It had been the same story, at every stage of my journey; the chances were that it would be the same thing again at Baden-Baden.

A stern chase is proverbially protracted, but on dry land it has usually one end. Mine ended in Baden on the fifth and first fine day, rather early in the afternoon. On arrival, I drove straight to the Darmstaedterhof, and asked whether a Mrs. Lascelles was staying there or not. She was. It seemed incredible. Were they sure she had not just left? They were sure. But she was not in; at my request, they made equally sure of that. She had probably gone to the Conversationshaus, to listen to the band. All Baden went there in

the afternoon, to listen to that band. There and then I paid off the cab and found my own way to this Conversationshaus, where I found a broad terrace, a fine long façade, a bandstand, and people listening and walking up and down, people listening and drinking beer or coffee at more little tables, people listening and reading on rows of chairs, people standing to listen with all their ears; but not for a long time the person I sought.

Not for a very long time; and yet, at last, and all alone, among the readers on the chairs, deep in a Tauchnitz volume, even here at Baden as in the Alps; more daintily, yet not less simply dressed, in pink muslin and a big black hat; and blessed here, as there, with such blooming health, such inimitable freshness, such an air of general well-being and of deep content, as almost to disgust me after my whole week's search and my own hourly qualms.

So I found Mrs. Lascelles in the end, and so I saw her until she looked up and saw me; then the picture changed; but I am not going to describe the change.

"Captain Clephane!"

"It has taken me all the week to find you," said I, as I replaced my hat.

Her eyes flashed again.

"Well! And, now you have found me, aren't you satisfied? Pray, have a good look, Captain Clephane; and you won't find anybody else!"

Her meaning dawned on me at last.

"I didn't expect to, Mrs. Lascelles."

"Am I to believe that?"

"You must do as you please. It is the truth. Mrs. Lascelles, I have been all the week looking for you, and you alone."

I spoke with some warmth, for, not only did I speak the truth, but it had become more and more the truth at every stage of my journey since Brigues. Mrs. Lascelles leaned back in her chair, and surveyed me, with less anger, but with the purer and more pernicious scorn.

"And what business had you to do that?" she asked, calmly. "How dare you. I should like to know?"

"I dared," said I, "because I owed

you a debt, which, I felt, must be paid in person, or it would never be paid at all. Mrs. Lascelles, I owed, and owe you yet, about the most abject apology man ever made! I have followed you all this way for no other earthly reason than to make it, in all sincere humility. But it has taken me, more or less, since Tuesday morning, and I can't kneel here. Do you mind if I sit down?"

Mrs. Lascelles drew in the hem of her pink muslin, with an all but insufferable gesture of unwilling resignation. I took the next chair but one, but, leaning my elbow on the chair-back between us, was rather the gainer by the intervening inches, which enabled me to study a perfect profile and the most wonderful coloring, as I could scarcely have done at still closer range. She never turned to look at me, but simply listened while the band played, and people passed, and I said my say. It was very short; there was so little that she did not know. There was the excitement about Bob, his subsequent reappearance, our scene in his room, and my last sight of him in the morning; but the bare facts went into few words, and there was no demand for details. Mrs. Lascelles seemed to have lost all interest in her latest lover; but, when I tried to speak of my own hateful hand in that affair, to explain what I could of it, but to extenuate nothing, and to apologize, from my heart, for it all, then there was a change in her; then her blood mounted, her bosom heaved, and I was silenced by a single flash from her eyes.

"Yes," said she, "you could let him think you were in earnest, you could pose as his rival, you could pretend all that! Not to me, I grant you! Even you did not go quite so far as that; or was it that you knew that I should see through you? You made up for it, however, the other night. That I never, never, never shall forgive. I, who had never seriously thought of accepting him, who was only hesitating in order to refuse him in the most deliberate and final manner imaginable—I, to have the word put into my mouth—by *you*! I, who was going, in any case, of my own accord, to be told to go—by *you*! One

thing you will never know, Captain Clephane, and that is how nearly you drove me into marrying him just to spite you and his miserable mother. I meant to do it, that night when I left you. It would have served you right if I had!"

She did not rise. She did not look at me again. But I saw the tears standing in her eyes—one I saw roll down her cheek—and the sight smote me harder than her hardest word, though more words followed, in broken whispers:

"It wasn't because I cared—that you hurt me as you did. I never did care for him—like that. It was—because—you seemed to think my society contamination—to an honest boy. I did care for him, but not like that. I cared too much for him to let him marry me—to contaminate him for life!"

I repudiated the reiterated word, with all my might. I had never used it, even in my thoughts; it had never once occurred to me. Had I not shown as much? Had I behaved as if I feared contamination for myself? I rapped out these questions, with undue triumph, in my heat, only to see their second edge as it cut me to the quick.

"But you were playing a part," retorted Mrs. Lascelles. "You don't deny it. Are you proud of it, that you rub it in? Or are you going to begin denying it now?"

That was impossible. It was too late now for denials. But, driven into my last corner, as it seemed, I relapsed for the moment into thought, and my thoughts took the form of a rapid retrospect of all the hours that this angry woman and I had spent together. They had been happy hours, so many of them unburdened by a single thought of Bob Evers and his folly, not one of them haunted by the usual sense of a part that is played. I almost wondered, as I realized this. I supposed it would be no use attempting to express myself to Mrs. Lascelles, but I felt I must say something before I went, so I said:

"I deny nothing, and I'm proud of nothing, but neither am I quite so ashamed, as, perhaps, I ought to be. Shall I tell you why, Mrs. Lascelles? It may have been an insolent and in-

famous part, as you imply; but I enjoyed playing it, and I used often to forget it was a part at all. So much so that even now I'm not so sure it was one! There—I suppose that makes it ten times worse. But I won't apologize again. Do you mind giving me that stick?"

I had rested the two of them against the chair between us. Mrs. Lascelles had taken possession of one, with which she was engaged in making small circles in the ground. She did not cease at my request. She smiled, instead.

"I mind very much," said she. "Now we have finished fighting, perhaps you will listen to the *Meistersinger*—for it is worth listening to on that band—and try to appreciate Baden while you are here. There are no more trains for another hour."

The wooded hills rose over the bandstand, against the bright, blue sky. The shadow of the colonnade lay sharp and black beyond our feet, with people passing, and the band crashing, in the sunlight beyond. That was Baden. I should not have found it a difficult place to appreciate a week or so before.

XIII.

It was the middle of November when I was shown once more into that little room in Elm Park Gardens. There was a fire, the windows were shut, and the electric light was a distinct improvement when the maid turned it on; otherwise, all was exactly as I had left it in August, and so often pictured it since. There was "Hope," presiding over the shelf of poets, and here "Paolo and Francesca," reminiscent as ever of Melbury Road, upon a wet Sunday, years and years ago. The day's *Times* and the week's *Spectator* were not less prominent than the last new problem novel; all three lay precisely where their predecessors had always lain; and my own dead self stood in its own old place upon the piano which had been in St. Helena with Napoleon. It is vanity's deserts to come across these unnecessary memorials of a decently buried boyhood; there is al-

ways something foolish about them, and I longed to confiscate this one of me.

But there was a photograph on the chimney-piece that interested me keenly. It was evidently the very latest of Bob Evers, and I studied it with a painful curiosity. Was the boy really altered, or did I only imagine it, from my secret knowledge of his affairs? To me he seemed graver, more sedate, less angelically trustful in expression, and yet something finer and manlier withal; to confirm the idea, one had only to compare this new one with the racket photograph now relegated to the back-ground. The round-eyed look was gone. Had I here yet another memorial of yet another buried boyhood? If so, I felt I was the sexton, and I might be ashamed, and I was.

"Looking at Bob? Isn't it a dear one of him? You see, he is none the worse!"

And Catherine Evers stood smiling, as warmly, as gratefully, as she grasped my hand; but, with her warmth, there was a certain nervousness of manner that had the curious effect of putting me perversely at my ease. I found myself looking critically at Catherine—really critically—for, I suppose, the first time in my life.

"He is playing football," she continued, full as ever of her boy. "I had a letter from him only this morning. He had his colors at Éton, you know, but he never dreamed of getting them at Cambridge, yet now he really thinks he has a chance! They tried him the other day, and he kicked a goal. Dear old Bob! If he does get them, he will be a blue and a half, he says. He writes so happily, Duncan! I have so much to be thankful for—to thank you for!"

Yes, Catherine was good to look at, there was no doubt of it, and this time she was not wearing any hat. Discouraging of the lad, she was animated, eager, enthusiastic, with light and life in every look of the intellectual face, in every glance of the large, intellectual eyes, and in every intonation of the keen, dry voice. A sweet woman; a young woman, a woman with a full heart of love, and sympathy, and tenderness—

for Bob! Yet, when she thanked me at the end, either upon an impulse, or because she thought she must, her eyes fell, and again I detected that slight embarrassment, which was none the less a revelation to me—in Catherine Evers, of all women in the world.

"We won't speak of that," I said, "if you don't mind. I am not proud of it."

Catherine scanned me more narrowly. I knew her better with that look. "Then, tell me about yourself, and do sit down," she said, drawing a chair near the fire, but sitting on the other side of it herself. "I needn't ask you how you are. I never saw you looking so well. That comes of going right away and not hurrying back. I think you were so wise! But, Duncan, I am sorry to see those two sticks still! Have you seen your man since you came back?"

"I have."

"Well?"

"There's no more army for me."

Catherine seemed more than sorry and disappointed; she looked quite indignant with the eminent specialist that had pronounced this final opinion. Was I sure he was the very best man for that kind of thing? She would have a second opinion, if she were I. Very well, then, a third! If there was one man she pitied from the bottom of her heart, it was the man without a profession or an occupation of some kind. Catherine looked, however, as if her pity were almost akin to horror.

"I have a trifle, luckily," I said. "I must try something else."

Catherine stared into the fire, as if thinking of something else for me to try. She seemed full of apprehension on my account.

"Don't worry about me," I said. "I came here to talk about somebody else."

Catherine almost started.

"I've told you about Bob," she said, with a suspicious upward glance from the fire.

"I don't mean Bob," said I, "or anything you may think I did for him or you. I said just now I didn't want to speak of it, and no more I do. Yet, as a matter of fact, I do want to speak to you about the lady in that case."

Catherine's face betrayed the mixed emotions of relief and fresh alarm.

"You don't mean to say the creature— But it's impossible! I heard from Bob only this morning. He wrote so happily!"

I could not help smiling at the nature and quality of the alarm.

"They have seen nothing more of each other, if that's what you fear," said I. "But what I do want to speak about is this creature, as you call her, and no one else. She has done nothing to deserve quite so much contempt. I want you to be just with her, Catherine!"

I was serious. I may have been ridiculous. Catherine evidently found me so, for, after gauging me with that wry but humorous look which I knew so well of old, for which I had been waiting this afternoon, she went off into the decorous little fit of laughter in which it had invariably ended.

"Forgive me, Duncan, dear! But you do look so serious, and you *are* so dreadfully broad! I never was. I hope you remember that? Broad minds and easy principles! But, really, though, Duncan, is there anything to be said for her? Was she a possible person, in any sense of the word?"

"Quite a probable person," I assured her.

"But I have heard all sorts of things about her!"

"From Bob?"

"No; he never mentioned her."

"Nor me, perhaps?"

"Nor you, Duncan, I am afraid. You see, he looked upon you as a successful rival. You wrote and told me so, if you remember, from some place on your way down from the mountains. Your letter and Bob arrived the same night."

I nodded.

"It was so clever of you!" pursued Catherine. "Quite brilliant; but I don't know what to say to your letting my baby climb that awful Matterhorn; in a fog, too!"

And there was real momentary reproach in the fire-lit face.

"I couldn't very well stop him, you know. Besides," I added, "it was such a chance."

"Of what?"

"Of getting rid of her! I thought you would think it worth the risk."

"I do," declared Catherine, on due consultation with the fire. "I really do! Bob is all I have—all I want—in this world, Duncan. But—yes—I'd rather he had never come home at all than come home married, at his age, to an Indian widow, whose first husband had divorced her! I mean it, Duncan; I do, indeed!"

"I am sure you do," said I. "It was just what I said to myself."

"To think of my Bob being number three!" murmured Catherine, with that plaintive drollery of hers which I had found irresistible in days of old.

I was able to resist it now. "So, those were the things you heard?" I remarked.

"Yes," said Catherine; "haven't you heard them?"

"I didn't need. I knew her in India, years ago."

Catherine's eyes opened.

"You knew this Mrs. Lascelles?"

"Before that was her name. I have also met her husband. If you had known him, you would be less hard on her!"

Catherine's eyes were still wide open. They were rather hard eyes, after all "Why did you not tell me you had known her when you wrote," she asked.

"It wouldn't have done any good. I did what you wanted done, you know. I thought that was enough."

"It was enough," echoed Catherine, with a quick return of grace. She looked into the fire. "I don't want to be hard upon the poor thing, Duncan! I know you think we women always are, upon each other. But to have come

back married—at his age—even to the nicest woman in the world! It would have been madness—ruination. Duncan, I'm going to say something else that may shock you!"

"Say away," said I.

Her voice had fallen. She was looking at me very narrowly, as if to measure the effect of her unspoken words.

"I am not so very sure about marriage," she went on, "at any age! Don't misunderstand me—I was very happy—but I, for one, could never marry again—and I am not sure that I ever want to see Bob——"

Catherine had spoken very gently, looking all the time at the fire; when she ceased, there was a space of utter silence in the little room. Then her eyes came back furtively to mine; and, presently, they were twinkling with their old, staid merriment.

"But to be number three!" she said, again. "My poor old Bob!"

And she smiled upon me, tenderly, from the depths of her alter-egoism.

"Well," I said, "he never will be."

"God forbid!" cried Catherine.

"He has forbidden. It will never happen."

"Is she dead?" asked Catherine, rather quickly, though not too quickly.

"Not that I know of."

But it was hard to repress a sneer.

"Then, what makes you so sure—that he never could?"

"Well, he never will in my time!"

"You are good to me," said Catherine, gratefully.

"Not a bit good," said I, "or—only to myself! . . . I have been good to no one else in this whole matter. That's what it all amounts to, and that's what I really came to tell you. Catherine—I am married to her myself!"



A SONG FOR THE ROAD

By Arthur Stringer

THE outland road lies white and long beneath the open sun,
The dust swings up between us where the mile-stone seasons run,
And, bent on our grim errands, empty-handed outward trend,
Earth's children of unrest, who night and noonday ask the End.

Yet, day by day, strange marvels lie beneath the vaulted blue,
And dusk by dusk our road is hung with wonders born anew;
But time and fog between us swing, and far we have to fare,
Perplexed by one low door remote and what awaits us there.

Yet, comrade swart, since step by step and side by side with you
I faced the open day and night, and knew the fears you knew—
On this, the unreturning road, O, what's the odds, old friend,
Since in some tavern dark and lone we slumber at the end!

O, what's the odds, since of our host we have not yet been told—
Since cramped the rooms of his dark house, O, cramped each room
and cold,

And one by one 'tis good-night all when we have passed his door—
Let's take the day, and go our way, and ask nor want for more!

So now we have the jovial wind about us noon and night,
A snatch of song, old comrade mine, a merry strain and light,
To wake and shake the roadway ere the falling dusk may bring
Its pensive note and wistful where the outland lanterns swing!

And while we have good sun and star and jocund blue above,
While earth's red wine of life still runs, our fill of opiate love—
Let's drink our fill for once and all, and in Death's dubious glooms
Undo our pack of memory, and warm those darkened rooms!

TWO HEARTS THAT BEAT AS ONE

By Frank Norris

Author of "McTeague," "The Octopus," Etc., Etc.

"I GUESS," began Hardenberg, "that you never yet heard about that time when Strokher—the Englisher—and Bunt McBride had a friendly go with bare knuckles—ten rounds it was, all because of a young woman.

It is a small earth, and I had just found out that my friend Bunt McBride—horse-wrangler, miner, faro-dealer and bone-gatherer—whose world was the plains and ranges of the great Southwest, was known of the Three Black Crows, Hardenberg, Ally Bazan and Strokher—the Englisher—and had even foregathered with them on more than one of their ventures for Cyrus Ryder's Exploitation Agency—ventures that had nothing of the desert in them, but that involved the sea, and the schooner, and the taste of the great-lunged canorous trades.

"Never heard of that, hey?" repeated Hardenberg.

I professed ignorance.

We were sitting on the stringpiece of a wharf, over in the Oakland Creek (which is not a creek, but an arm of San Francisco Bay), where some fool had told us we could catch striped bass. It was now eleven o'clock, and we had been there since early morning without even the mild diversion of rebaiting the hooks.

Hardenberg reeled up, examined the bait and cast out far into the creek. Then he set the click and laid the rod down beside him.

"Now," he said, doggedly, "bite or bunk—it's all one to me. But I don't propose to dawdle this here buggy whip no longer." (It was my pet eight-ounce

split bamboo.) "But about Bunt and Strokher, now."

"They fought?"

Hardenberg grunted.

"They sure did," he said, grimly. "Friendly like and all, but keen, keen as pirates."

He took a pinch of tobacco from his pouch and rolled a cigarette in the twinkling of an eye, using only one hand, in true Mexican fashion.

"Now," said he, "I am going to tell you all about that same affair just so as you can get a line on the consuming and devouring dam-foolishness of male humans when there is a woman in the case. Woman," said Hardenberg, wagging his head philosophically, "woman is a weather-breeder. Mister Dixon, there are three things I'm afraid of. I don't just rightly call to mind at this moment what the last two are, but the first is Woman. When I sight Woman bearing down on my course, I put my ship about, Mr. Dixon, without loss of time. And Strokher," he added, irrelevantly, "would have married this woman. Yes, and Bunt would have married her, too, for the matter of that."

"Was there another man?" I asked.

"No," said Hardenberg. Then he began to chuckle behind his mustache. "Yes, they was," he smote a knee. "They sure was another man. You may well say that. Well, now, Mister Dixon, lemme take and tell you the whole 'how.'"

And here follows the "how" of the battle of Strokher and Bunt McBride, as Hardenberg told it to me:

"It began," said Hardenberg, "when

I joined in with a scheme that Cy Ryder had gotten up for the Three Crows. There was a row down in Guatemala. Some gazabo named Palachi—Barreto Palachi—finding times dull and the boys off their feed, ups and says, 'Exercise is what I need. I will now take and overthrow the blame government.' So this same Palachi rounds up a band of *insurrectos* and begins pestering and hectoring the government, and roaring and bellowing, and making a procession of himself, till he regularly pervades the landscape, and before you know what, here's a real live Revolution—thing spoiling the scenery, and the government is plum bothered.

"They rounded up the gazabo at last, at a place on the coast, but he escapes as easy as how-do-you-do. But he can't get back to his *insurrectos*, the blame government holding possession of all the passes into the hinterland. 'So,' says Palachi, 'what is the matter with me going up to Frisco and getting in touch with my financial backers, and conspirating to smuggle down a load of arms?' And this same thing he does. There's where we Three Black Crows come in.

"Cy Ryder gives us the job of taking the schooner down to a certain point on the Guatemala coast and there delivering to the agents of Palachi three thousand stand of .48 Winchesters.

"But when we began to talk details, Ryder says, 'Boys, here's where I cashes right in. You set right to me for the schooner and the cargo; but you go to Palachi's agent over here in Berkeley, across the bay, for instructions and directions.'

"'But,' says Strokher, the Englisher, 'this blind betting don't suit our hand. Why not make right up to Mister Palachi himself?'

"'No,' Ryder said; 'no, boys, you can't do that. The signor is laying as low as a toad in a wheel-track these days, because of the local police. You must have your palaver with the agent, which,' he says, 'is a woman.' And at that I groaned low and despairing.

"So soon as Ryder says 'Woman' I knew there was trouble in the wind. And right there is where I lost my pres-

ence of mind. What I should have said was, 'Mister Ryder, Ally Bazan, Bunt McBride, and gentlemen all: You are good boys, and you deal and drink fair, and I love you all with a love that cannot be uttered; but I'm not keeping case on this game any longer. Woman and me is like mules and music. We weren't ever made to ride in the same go-cart. Good-by.' That's what I should have said. But I didn't. I walked right into the mess like the mud-head that I was, and got mired, just as I might have known I would.

"Ryder gave us the address of this here female agent over in Berkeley, and we four hiked over there in as cruel a rain as ever killed corn. We found the place after a while—a lodging-house, all lorn and loony, set down all by itself in the middle of some real estate extension, like an L. S. station on a sand spit, and rang the bell and asked the party that came to the door if the Signorita Esperanza Ulivarri (that was the name Ryder had given us) was receiving callers that day—and we showed Ryder's note. The party that opened the door was a greaser, the worst-looking I ever clapped eyes on, but he said to come in and to wait '*poco tiempo*.'

"Well, we waited *mucho tiempo*—*my mucho*, all sitting on the edge of the sofa in the front parlor, with our hats on our knees, like philly-loo birds on a rail. And Strokher, who was to do the talking, got the fidgets by and by; and because he was only resting the toes of his feet on the floor his knees began jiggering; and along of watching him, my knees began to go, and then Bunt's, and then Ally Bazan's. And there we sat all in a row and jiggered and jiggered. Great snakes! it makes me sick to the stomach to think what idiots we were.

"Then, after a long time, we heard a rustle of silk petticoats, and we all grabbed hold of one another and looked scared from under our eyebrows, and then—then, Mister Dixon, there walks into that bunk-house parlor the loveliest-looking female woman that ever wore hair.

"She was lovelier than Mary Ander-

son; she was lovelier than Lotta. She was tall and black-haired, and had an eye. . . . Well, I don't know—but when she gave you one little flicker of that same eye, you felt it was about time to lie right down and say, 'Ma'am, I would esteem it a favor if you were to take and wipe your boots on my waistcoat, just so as you could hear my heart beating.' That's the kind of female woman *she* was.

"Well, when Strokher had caught his second wind, we began to talk business.

"And you are to take a passenger back with you,' says Esperanza, after a while.

"What kind might he be?' asks Strokher.

"She fisted out her calling card at that and tore it in two and gave Strokher one half.

"It's the party,' she says, 'who'll come aboard off San Diego, on your way down, and who will give you the other half of this card—the half I have here—which I am going to mail to him. And you be sure the halves match before you let him come aboard. And when that party *does* come aboard,' she says, 'he is to take charge.'

"Very good,' says Strokher, mincing and silly, like a chessy-cat lapping cream. 'Very good, ma'm; your orders shall be obeyed.' He sure said it just like that, as if he spoke out of a story-book. And I kicked him under the table for the foolishness of it.

"Then we palavered a whole lot more, and settled a good many preliminaries, and when we'd got as far as we could that day, the signorita up and said:

"Now, me good fellows.' (She spoke in Spanish.) 'Now, me good fellows, you must drink a drink with me.' She herded us out into the dining-room, and brought out—not whisky, but a fat green-and-gold bottle of champagne, and when Ally Bazan had fired it off she filled our glasses—dinky little glasses they were, like flower vases. Then she stood up there before us, fine and tall, and all in black silk, and put her glass up high and sung out:

"To the Revolution!"

"And we, all solemn-like, said, 'To the Revolution,' and crooked our elbows.

"When we came to, about half an hour later, we were in the street outside, having just said good-by to the signorita. We were quiet enough the first block or so, and then Bunt McBride says—stopping dead in his tracks: 'I pause to remark that when a young female party having black hair and a killing eye gets good and ready to travel up the center aisle of a church, I know the gent to show her the way, which he is six foot one in his stocking feet, some freckled across the nose, and shoots with both hands.'

"Which observations,' answered Strokher, twirling his lady-killers, 'have my hearty indorsement and co-operation, saving in the particular of the description of the gent. The gent to show the way is five feet eleven high, three feet thick, is the only son of my mother, and has yellow mustaches and a buck tooth.'

"He don't qualify,' put in Bunt; 'first, because he's a Englisher, and, second, because he's up against a American—and, besides, he has a tooth that is bucked.'

"Buck or no buck,' flared out Strokher, 'what might be the meaning of that remark concerning being an Englisher?'

"The fact of his being Englisher,' answered Bunt, 'is only half the handle; t'other half being the fact that the first-named gent is all American. No Yank ain't never took no dust from off a Englisher, whether in walking-matches, women or war.'

"But there's an Englisher,' sung out Strokher, 'not forty mile from here as can nick the nose of a freckled Yank, if so be occasion require.'

"Now, wasn't that foolish-like, of those two gazabos flying up into the air like two he-hens on a hot plate, for nothing in the world except that a neat-looking female woman had flickered a eye at them?

"Well, we others, Ally Bazan and me, gave them some pretty straight talk about being more kinds of a blame fool

than a pup with a bug. They simmered down some, but all the way home I could see them glaring at each other, and drawing themselves up, proud-like and presumptuous, and I groaned again, not loud, but deep, as the good book says.

"We had two or three more palavers with the Signorita Esperanza, and slacked the deck to beat down the harbor police, and to nip down the coast with our contraband. And each time we talked with the signorita there were those two locoes stepping and sidling and squeezing her hand under the table, and acting that silly that Ally Bazan and I took and beat our heads against the wall so soon as we were alone, just for pure out-and-out mortification.

"Finally came the last talky-talk, and we were to sail next day, and maybe snatch the little joker through or be took and hung by the *costa guardas*. And 'Good-by' says Strokher to Esperanza, in a fainting, die-away voice, like a kitten with a cold: 'And ain't we ever going to meet no more?'

"'I sure hopes as much,' put in Bunt McBride, smirking so you would have thought he was a he-milliner selling a bonnet. 'I hope,' says he, 'that our delightful acquaintanceship ain't going to end this way.'

"'Oh, you nice big mister men,' pipes up the signora, in English, 'we will meet down there in Guatemala soon again—yes. Because I go down by the vapor carriages to-morrow.'

"'Unprotected, too,' says Strokher, wagging his fool head. 'Unprotected, and so young.'

"Holy Geronimo! I don't know what more fool drivel they had. But they each kissed Esperanza good-by, and finally we all got away. Ally Bazan and me rounded them up, and took them to the boat, and put them to bed as though they were so many kids.

"The next day, about one o'clock in the morning, we let the schooner slip, quiet as may be, and caught the out-tide through the gate of the bay. Lord! we were keyed up. I can tell you, and Ally Bazan and Bunt were in the bows with

drawn and cocked revolvers in case the police boat should come along and ask questions.

"Well, what with this and that, we nipped out with the little jokers (they were down in the manifest as mining pumps), and began to cross the bar.

"Poor Bunt had some trouble just then. You see, this was the first time he had ever gone galleying about on blue water, and when that schooner hit the bar he began to remember his inside arrangements weren't made of chilled steel and rawhide. First, he got regularly sad and shivery, and then he said he felt as poor and mean as a prairie dog that has eaten a horned toad by mistake. He went to Ally Bazan and gave it out that he was going to die, and that he was sure sad and depressed, and hadn't much use for life, anyhow. He said he'd ridden some pretty lively sunfishes in his time, but that for bucking, rearing and general high and lofty tumbling that there boat beat anything in his experience.

"But we sent him below, and had him lay up quiet, and after a while he felt better. By next day he could sit up and take solid food, and straightaway began his everlasting dam-foolishness with Strokher again.

"You would have thought that each of those two mush-heads was trying to act the part of a cow which has lost her calf. They went mooing and mooning about that schooner that mournful it would have made you yell just out of sheer nervousness. First one would up and hold his head in his hand and lean on the rail and sigh till he'd raise his pants clean out the top of his boots. And then the other would go off in another part of the boat, and he'd sigh and moon, and take on fit to sicken a seagull.

"When we'd sit down to feed, Strokher would say to Bunt:

"'Bunt, d'you thinks the signorita will take harm along o' those *Rurales* and government spies?'

"And Bunt would say back:

"'Stroke, I don't just rightly know, but I'm doubtful as to how she should 'a' been let go alone. Such a young and

byoutifse female girl among them roving bands o' lawless soldiery!

"But, by and by, when we were maybe six days to the good of 'Frisco, the two gets kind of sassy with each other, and, at last, they has a heart-to-heart talk, and decides that either one of them would stand a chance to win so only the other was out of the game.

"It's double or nothing," said Bunt, who was something of a card-sharp, "for either you or me, Stroke; and if you are agreeable, I'll play you a round of jacks for the chance at the signorita—the loser to pull out of the running for good and all."

"No, Strokher wouldn't come in on any such game, he said. He'd win her, he said, as a man, and not as a poker player. No, nor he won't throw dice for the chance of winning Esperanza, nor he won't flip a coin, nor yet wrestle.

"But," said he, all of a sudden, "I'll tell you what I will do. You are a big, thick, strapping hulk of a two-fisted drayhorse, Bunt, and I ain't an *effete* degenerate myself. Here's what I propose—that we lay out a sixteen-foot ring on the quarter-deck of this here boat, and you and me strips to the buff and settles the whole business by Queensbury rules—and may the best man win."

"Bunt looks him over.

"And," says he, "what might be your weight, Stroke. I don't figure on hurting you if so be you are below my class."

"I fight at a hundred and seventy," says Strokher.

"And me," answers Bunt, "at a hundred and seventy-five. We're matched."

"Is it a go?" asks Strokher.

"You bet your great grandmammy's tortis-shell chessy cat it's a go," says Bunt, quick as a wink.

"We didn't lose any time trying to reason with them, for they were sure set on having the go, and getting the question settled. But Ally Bazan says to me:

"This here ain't going to be no bare-knuckle bout, let me tell you, Hardie, for the reason that them two boys ain't fit to die yet; and if they turn them-

selves loose on one another with bare knuckles there's going to be a double case of manslaughter on our hands. Did you bring your gauntlets along?"

"It just happened that I did have them in my chest, and Bunt he had a pair, too. We got them all out, and Ally Bazan sews a big wad of raveled rope onto each one and covers the same with oilcloth off the kitchen table. Then we laid out a ring on the quarter-deck and ran the schooner in under the lee of the land and lay her to.

"Then, along about four o'clock on a fine, still day, we resined the ring and says, 'All is ready.'

"Ally Bazan, he's referee and I'm timekeeper, and have to ring the ship's bell every three minutes to let them know to quit and that the round's over.

"We gets them into the ring, each in his own corner, sitting on a bucket, the timekeeper being second to Bunt and the referee second to Strokher. And then, after they've shook hands I climbs up on the chicken coop and rings the bell, and they begins.

"Mister Dixon, I've seen Tim Heenan at his best, and Sayers when he was a slasher, and also several other pugs and boxers; and I've seen two short-horned bulls arguing about a question of leadership. But, so help me *Bob!* the fight I saw that day made the others look like a young ladies' quadrille. Oh, I ain't going to tell you of that mill in detail, nor yet by rounds. Rounds! There wa'n't any rounds after the first five minutes. I rung the blame bell till I'd rung her loose, and Ally Bazan yelled, 'Break away,' and, 'Time's up,' till he was hoarse, but you could no more separate them two than you could have put the brakes on an earthquake. They made their own rounds. Every now and then they'd pull apart and Bunt maybe would say, all blowing and panting:

"You're a sure good man, Stroke."

"And Strokher would wipe the hair out of his eyes with the back of his glove and say back, between breaths:

"You're some willing yourself, Bunt."

"And then they'd go back at it again till the whole ship trembled.

"At about supper-time we pulled them apart—we could do it by then, they were both so tired, and jammed each one of them down in his corner. I rang the bell good and hard, and Ally Bazan stood up on a bucket in the middle of the ring and said:

"I declare this here glove contest a draw."

"And draw it surely was. They'd fought for two hours steady, and never a one got the better of the other. They'd given each other lick for lick as fast and as steady as they could stand to it, wrestling, roughing and boring in, upper-cutting and side-stepping—and both willing to the very last.

"When Ally Bazan called it a draw, they got up and wobbled toward each other and shook hands, and Bunt he said:

"Stroke, I thanks you a whole lot for as neat a go as ever I mixed into."

"And Strokher answered up:

"Bunt, I love you better than ever. You're the first man I've met that I couldn't do, too."

"And the faces those boys had on them! Well, I guess their mothers might have told them apart. Nobody else could.

"You remember, now, that we were to take on a party at San Diego who was to show the other half of Esperanza's card, and thereafter to boss the job. Well, we hiked on down to San Diego, and stood off and on till nightfall and there showed two green lights and one white every three and a half minutes for half an hour—this being the signal agreed on.

"There was a kind of moon, and we could see pretty well. After we'd signaled about an hour we got the answer—a one-minute green flare, and pretty soon made out a boat coming off. There were two people in her, the boatman and another party sitting in the stern.

"Ally Bazan and me and Strokher and Bunt were all leaning over the side watching, when all at once I up and groaned some sad; the party in the stern of the boat being female.

"Ain't we never going to get shut of them?" said I. But the words were no more than off my teeth when Strokher piped up with:

"It's *her*!" and he gasped just as though he'd been shot hard.

"What," says Bunt, "her? Oh, I'm sure a-dreaming," he says, just that silly like.

"And the mugs we've got," says Strokher, and at that they both fell to swearing to beat all I ever heard.

"I *can't* let her see me so bunged up," said Bunt; "oh, whatever-and-which is to be done?"

"And I," whimpered Strokher, "I look like a real genuine blown-in-the-glass pug. But, never mind," he said, "we'll tell her these are sure honorable scars got because we fought for her."

"Weil, the boat came up and the female party jumped out and came up the ladder onto the deck. Without saying a word, she handed to Bunt the torn half of the card, and he fished out his half and matched the two by the light of a lantern.

"By this time the rowboat had gone off a little ways. Then, at last, Bunt said:

"Welcome aboard, signorita."

"And Strokher cut in with:

"We thought it was to be a man who was to join us here to take command; but *you*," he says—and, oh! sugar wouldn't have melted in his mouth; but *you* are always our mistress."

"Very right, *bucno*, me good fellows," said the signorita, "but don't you be afraid that there's no *man* at the head of this business."

"And with that the party chucks off bonnet and skirt, and *I'll be a Mexican if it wasn't a man, after all!*

"I'm the Signor Baretto Palachi, gentlemen," said he. "The jingo police made the disguise necessary. Gentlemen, I regret to have been obliged to deceive such gallant *compadres*; but war knows no law."

"Bunt and Strokher gave one look at the signor and another at their own spoiled faces. Then:

"Come back here with the boat," roared

Strokher, and with that—upon me word, you'd have thought they two were both moved with the same spring—over the side they went, into the water, and struck out for the boat as hard as ever they could lay to it.

"The boat met them—God only knows what the boatman thought—they climbed in, and the last I saw of them they were putting for the shore—each taking an oar—and, mister man, they were making that boat *hum*.

"Well, we sailed away without them, and a year or more afterward I met them in Cy Rider's office in 'Frisco."

"Did you ask them about it all?" said I.

"Mister man," observed Hardenberg, "I am several kinds of a dam-fool, I know it. But sometimes I am wise. I want to live as long as I can, and die when I can't help it. I did *not*, neither then nor thereafterward, either make a joke, nor yet any allusion about or concerning the Signorita Esperanza Uli-varri in the hearing of Strokher and Bunt McBride. I've seen—you remember—both those boys use their fists, and, likewise, Bunt, as he says, shoots with both hands."



THE OLD YEAR

WHAT is the old year? 'Tis a book
 On which we backward sadly look,
 Not willing quite to see it close,
 For leaves of violet and rose
 Within its heart are thickly strewn,
 Marking Love's dawn and golden noon;
 And turn down pages, noting days
 Dimly recalled through Memory's haze;
 And tear-stained pages, too, that tell
 Of starless nights and mournful knell
 Of bells tolling through trouble's air
 The *De Profundis* of despair—
 The laugh, the tear, the shine, the shade,
 All 'twixt the covers gently laid;
 No uncut leaves, no page unscanned:
 Close it and lay it in God's hand.

CLARENCE URMY.

THE WAY OF A WOMAN

By George Hibbard

TO be on the right side of thirty; to stand six feet tall; to have shoulders in proportion; never to have known a day's illness in your life; to be able to run a mile under five minutes, and to swim one in not much more than twenty-five; to have ten goals for a handicap at polo, and to be a "scratch" man at golf; to hold a master's certificate, and be able to sail your own yacht, and to have had one ever since boyhood to sail; to bear a name that puts all the best of the world at your disposal, opening every door and assuring instant attention; to have skimmed the cream of Europe and America—all these are very good things.

To find suddenly, however, when you had every reason to expect the possession of a great fortune, that you are absolutely penniless; to know that, whereas, existence has hitherto been as luxurious as abounding wealth in this most luxurious of centuries could make it, you must henceforward depend on your own exertions; to have had the girl that you feel is the one woman in the world refuse to marry you; to have just sent your resignation to all your clubs; to be standing in the famous ballroom of the finest house in the town, at the most brilliant moment of the great ball of the year, taking what you believe to be your last look at the life that has always been yours, since you must start, in the gray of the morning, for a distant land, where you know that privations and labor await you—these are disagreeable facts.

Such was the position in which John Wilmot found himself upon a winter's night in the full swing of the season. The blow could not have fallen more suddenly, and never was there a quicker

change in any life than that which had taken place between his rising that morning—at a sufficiently late hour—and the moment, when he stood in the doorway watching the changing maelstrom of the dancers.

The only relative that Wilmot could remember in the world was his uncle—old, white-haired, white-mustached Ferdinand Wilmot, whose fortune enabled him to give the dinners that his knowledge made possible, and who had gained a world-wide reputation in doing it. His was the only care Wilmot had ever known, and the education given him by the old worldling had been a singular one, though a much better one than most people would have imagined possible under the circumstances.

The boy had been kept at good schools, and when he was older he had been shipped off to Paris, where he had carried on his studies at the *Ecole des Ponts et Chaussées* and the *Ecole Spéciale des Mines*. Old Wilmot insisted that the boy should know something practical, and, though cast into Paris with a superabundance of money, a natural bent in Wilmot's character had led him to work. He had at once found a certain interest in the mysteries of his profession, and had passed the days in abstruse calculations of "strains" or the niceties of "wind pressure." All was done purely from the love of doing it, for Ferdinand Wilmot, a widower of years, without children, had no one to whom he could leave his fortune, and John had been taught to consider himself his uncle's heir. The world had always looked upon him as such, and, wherever he was not received for himself, he was welcomed effusively

as the inheritor of the Wilmot millions. He had ranged through Europe, and then had tested all that his own country had to offer. He had done all there was to do—gone in for everything—while Ferdinand Wilmot looked on, silently but encouragingly. Then he had begun to tire of his life of "sport" and carelessness.

Whether he began to tire of it because he suddenly came upon Miss Edith Archdale, or whether because he was beginning to tire of it Miss Archdale suddenly seemed to make all the world for him, might have been a question in many cases. But he, who drove an automobile at a mile a minute over the worst roads in the hottest race with such a firm hand and such untroubled nerve, proved by his nervousness when he saw her that he had fallen in love as few men do. He recognized himself what he felt, and made no attempt to conceal it from his world. There was a desperate fatality about it that was very much in keeping with his character. He threw his love before the girl as a gambler throws his last stake, knowing that it is his last, and that with it rests all. His world was puzzled—for this was unusual enough—and the girl herself was a good deal bewildered, not to say frightened. Probably a young woman of her beauty and position, to whom it had come to be little more of an event to receive a proposal of marriage than to put on a new pair of gloves, was not unprepared to have another man fall in love with her; but she was not accustomed to such an unreasoning and inconsiderate way of doing it.

The end had come only three days before, in the late afternoon, after every one had gone, and the little flame of the kettle on the table was the only light in the big drawing-room. He had been silent for a moment, and then he spoke:

"I waited till all the others went," he said, in a low, dull voice, "because I wanted to say something. I have wanted to say it for a long time. I think you know what it is. There is no reason to say it now more than before, for you have given me no hope. But I

have to say it, for I can't wait. I love you more than you know."

He was silent again, and she could hear the gentle purr of the steam from the kettle.

"You have nothing to say?" he asked, at length.

"I don't know what to say," she replied, slowly. "Oh, I like you, and I don't want to hurt you, but— Shall I tell you the truth?"

"Yes," he said, readily.

"You have so much to give me. I know that you are doing me a great honor—that I should be proud—that I should be envied. But I cannot tell whether it is *you* or not, and I am afraid. In this it is so necessary to be sure, and, when that is not possible, don't you think that the better way is to do nothing?"

"Then, you have nothing to say," he went on, steadily.

"I like you. I hate to hurt you," she repeated, eagerly, bending forward and drawing patterns with her spoon. "No, I have nothing to say—but," she went on, suddenly and determinedly, "when I say that, it seems to me that I say all. I—I can't do it."

The next day Wilmot had withdrawn to a corner of the coast, where he had been in the habit of going for duck-shooting. There he had played the bear for two days, and on the morning of the third had emerged from his hiding, and that evening was again at his favorite club. No one could have dreamed that anything had happened. He appeared as he always did to those scattered about the place. As he approached one group, he heard a large, heavy man saying, earnestly:

"The country has to be opened up. The resources of the region have to be developed. The question is, how it's to be done. Ah!" he went on, as Wilmot dropped into a chair, "I don't suppose you know any young engineering fellow that I could trust utterly who wants a job?"

"I am an engineer," replied Wilmot, smiling faintly.

To all the joke seemed exquisite, and

all laughed, with the facile, club laughter.

"I am," asserted Wilmot. "I've diplomas for which I worked hard enough in the schools in Paris to prove it."

"There's your chance, Malleson," chuckled one of the group, "to help a worthy young man earn an honest penny."

"I wish I could get him," said Malleson, earnestly. "Everything depends on having some one I can trust thoroughly—on having an absolutely fair and unprejudiced report. You see, if the mines are all right, there would be a railway. All of that means money, and, if things turned out well, I could make it an ultimate fortune in a small way for any one who went into it."

Wilmot sauntered on. There was nothing to interest him in the subject under discussion. He paused to talk to one man about a horse he intended to buy; he agreed with another to play in a match game of "squash." Then he returned to his apartments, and found a note from his uncle, asking him to breakfast on the following morning at a famous hotel.

He was young, and he slept well. Indeed, it was late when he awoke, and he was obliged to make his man hurry as he was dressing in order to be able to meet his uncle at the time appointed. The morning was pleasant—a brisk, clear morning of midwinter. The well-dressed morning crowd filled the sidewalk. The well-equipped carriages rolled past in the street. He sauntered on in the bright sunlight, surrounded by the splendid life of the imperial city. As he entered the wide room, he saw that his uncle was already at a table by a window, looking out on the glittering avenue, filled with the brilliant everyday pageant.

Ferdinand Wilmot had always been as celebrated for the perfection of his dress as for the accuracy of all the other trivial, graceful things he spent his life in doing. This morning he presented a perfect picture of ruddy, robust, well-groomed old age. Even the flowers in his buttonhole appeared fresher and crisper than other flowers. He smiled

pleasantly at his nephew as he caught sight of him, and waved his hand in salutation. Jack Wilmot made his way across the room, and sank into a chair opposite his complacent relative.

"I've ordered breakfast," said his uncle, glancing at the head waiter, who was still bowing before him—that great personage, who was so careful in his attentions, and knew so well where to bestow them. The bend in his back was always a little greater and his sympathy always a little warmer and more respectful for Ferdinand Wilmot than for any one else.

The breakfast was such as only Ferdinand Wilmot could have composed, and cooked as it would have been cooked for him alone. And, if the breakfast was the perfect attainment of knowledge and art, Ferdinand Wilmot's talk that morning was a worthy accompaniment. He talked as he rarely took the trouble to talk, pouring out, in his indolent but energetic way, stories of all sorts of men with whom he had been thrown in the many lands in which he had sojourned, with caustic comment and an occasional epigram that flashed and sparkled like a shining blade thrust through a piece of silk. He seemed to make a point of rendering the breakfast as consummate and brilliant as possible, and, when the last mouthful had been eaten and the head waiter had inquired, with solicitous deference, whether he had been pleased, the old man fell back in his chair, eyeing his nephew curiously.

"You thought it was a good breakfast?" he asked.

"One of your finest achievements," responded the young man.

"You enjoyed it?"

"Exceedingly."

"I am very glad," continued the old man, steadily, "that you thought it good. It should be, for it cost the last cent I have in the world."

His nephew stared at him in amazement.

"Yes," continued old Wilmot, smoothly, "I am ruined. The world will know it from the newspapers this evening. Circumstances have been such that I have lost everything. After what

I owe has been paid; there will be just enough left to pay for this breakfast, so, Jack, I am afraid it is the last that I ever shall give you."

In his amazement, Jack Wilmot sat gazing silently at his uncle.

"For years I have foreseen that this was coming," his uncle went on, "and have done what I could for you. My own motto has been a short life and a merry one, and I gave you what I should choose myself. I hope you have enjoyed existence as much as I have, for we have come to the end of our rope." Ferdinand Wilmot was speaking very calmly, smiling a little, even, and any one watching him would have thought he was merely recounting some gossip of the day. "I have arranged for a small annuity, and I shall go to live in Naples, where one needs no other luxuries than the climate and the country. You will have to look out for yourself now, and I hope you will fall on your feet."

This had been the way in which John Wilmot learned that the rosy future that had seemed assured to him was a delusion; that only by hard work of hand or brain could he in future hope to possess anything.

That afternoon the greatly astonished Malleeson saw John Wilmot appear before him, in his downtown office, and offer to undertake the job of which he had spoken so casually the night before at the club. With a gasp, Malleeson acceded to the proposition, and Wilmot made arrangements for immediate departure.

He was to go the next morning, for an indefinite period, into the wastes of an almost unexplored country. When his preparations were finished, the hour was late, but he knew that the guests were then arriving at the big house opposite the park. The ball was to be the event of the year. For weeks the newspapers had written about it; for days it had been the subject of conversation at every dinner and in every smoking-room. Nothing had ever been like it in splendor and lavishness. Never had there been such flowers, never such music, never such favors for the cotillon.

With a short laugh, Wilmot thought of what was going forward—of what all those whom he knew were thinking—of what he would have been thinking if now he had not been obliged to think of things very different. In a spirit of adventure that was well in accord with his nature, he dragged some clothes from a trunk, dressed, and in a short time was being driven slowly up the avenue, watching the lights he knew so well, listening to the sounds that were so familiar and that he would not hear for so long. He understood that columns of staring print had made his plight known to the town; he realized the talk that such an event would bring; he was aware that all was over for him; still, he wished to have one more look before he passed out into solitude and obscurity. He thought he should like to remember the glories of the ball that night on many another night when he should lie far away in dark and narrow quarters, or under the sky itself.

"I won't sneak away," he resolved. "I'll make a fighting finish."

Almost every one had arrived when he reached the house, and entered, and passed up the broad stairs. He was received without a look or an inflection of voice that might have led him to believe that his hostess knew there was any change in his life—that he did not stand in the same relation to the world that he had when he dined at the house a week before. She was a woman of much experience. She had seen many people come and go, and had witnessed many sudden changes. And she was, truly, Wilmot's friend. As he passed on, however, he could not help noticing that people whispered and looked. Observing this, Wilmot raised his head a little straighter and walked a little defiantly. Though many nodded and smiled at him, he was not stopped, as usually would have been the case, half a dozen times in a dozen steps.

Whether there was a desire to evade the awkwardness of a meeting, or whether people really avoided him, he could not be sure. But he quickly thought of how he should have escaped the embarrassment if another had been

in his place, and gave his old companions the benefit of the doubt. He knew his world so well that he understood that, if it is too careless to be kind, it has no desire to be actively unkind, and that its object is rather to save itself from annoyance than to inflict pain. Still, he resented a little his isolation. He was glad now that he had come, glad to be showing he was not afraid. In the doorway of the ballroom he paused for a moment.

All his life he had been accustomed to such scenes, but he was dazzled, for he was, in a manner, looking at it all with new eyes. About one o'clock the ball was at its height. The musicians were playing a wondrous waltz. The dancers were moving with swifter step, with rosier cheeks and quicker breath. The air was balmy with the scent of flowers. The lights were flashed back by a thousand faceted gems. Everywhere was movement and change, and, in the brilliancy of light, the subtlety of scent, the witchery of sound, the senses might well be ravished and the austere anchorite lured back to the world again. The splendor of it struck him as it never had before, and he thought for the first time with real regret of all that he must abandon. Possibly, because his fall had been so sudden, and in the very swiftness of it there had been a certain exhilaration, he had not hitherto for a moment felt truly sorry.

Among the dancers he saw Miss Archdale gliding over the floor. The light fell strongly upon her, and he saw again how beautiful she was. Then he understood why he had really come. Not for a last look at the life and the people, not for one more sight of the world that had been his and that he was leaving forever. He recognized at last that he had come to see her, to catch one more glimpse of her loveliness before he went to bury himself in a distant corner of the earth.

Miss Archdale noticed him. She paled a little, and her lips parted slightly. But, as their eyes met, hers did not fall before his glance. He wished to look away, to turn and move from the place, but he did not stir.

Something in her glance held him, and, when she paused by the doorway, he was still there.

"It is very crowded," she said to the man who was with her.

He assented, eagerly, as men usually assented to the smallest thing Miss Archdale said.

"Oh," she exclaimed, "I did not know the De Wordes were here! They must have come from Washington for the ball. There is Mrs. de Worde now."

"Where?" asked the man. "I think not."

"There," said Miss Archdale, vaguely indicating with a nod of her head a corner of the ballroom, and, as the man looked earnestly, she turned to Wilmot.

"Ask me to dance," she said.

He hesitated. The other man looked back. If he did not do her bidding, she might misunderstand. Wilmot bowed, and proffered his request.

"Come," she said, and they moved away. They passed through the room, through a wide doorway, on into a conservatory, so dim and vast as to appear almost deserted. They kept on, Miss Archdale actually leading the way, and Wilmot following. At length, she reached a seat half hidden behind some palms. The music came softly to them, the subdued murmur of talk rose about them; in reality, they were as much alone as if in some tropic solitude.

Wilmot stood before her, looking at her.

"Sit down," she said.

"But," he objected, "you sent me away."

"I call you back again," she answered, imperiously.

"You do not know—you cannot have heard," he said, taking the place beside her. "All the newspapers had it this evening, but you cannot have seen them. I am ruined—penniless."

"I know. I have seen," she replied, briefly.

"But I don't understand," he said. "I told you that I loved you, and you sent me away when I was fool enough to think that I might have some chance to win you."

"Do you remember what I said?" she asked.

"You said you could not do it."

"I said I could not tell—I was not sure."

They were speaking quickly—brokenly—as people speak at parting, when a boat is moving from the shore, or a train is starting and gaining speed.

"But, if you could not know then—if you could not do it then——"

He made a swift gesture of despair.

"Yes," she said, breathlessly.

"Then," he went on, quickly, "I had everything. Now I have lost all. I

drop to-morrow out of sight, going to try to win a fortune I may never gain. Then I had something—much, as the world considers it—to offer you, and now——"

"Now," she said, putting her hand gently upon his arm, "please ask me once more."

He turned, and stared at her, in amazement.

"Dearest," he said, "you know I love you. I have only just found out how much I love you."

"Very well," said the girl, simply. "I have found out that I love you, too."



THE CAPTURE

By Paul Laurence Dunbar

DUCK come switchin' 'cross de lot,

Hi, oh, Miss Lady!

Hurry up an' hide de pot,

Hi, oh, Miss Lady!

Duck's a mighty 'spicious fowl,

Slick ez snake an' wise ez owl.

Hol' dat dog, don't let 'im yowl,

Hi, oh, Miss Lady!

Th'ow dat co'n out kind o' slow,

Hi, oh, Miss Lady!

Keep yo'se'f behime de do',

Hi, oh, Miss Lady!

Lots o' food'll kill his feah.

Co'n is cheap, but fowls is deah,

Come, good ducky, come on heah,

Hi, oh, Miss Lady!

Ain't he fat, an' ain't he fine!

Hi, oh, my lady!

Des cain't wait to mck him mine,

Hi, oh, my lady!

See him waddle when he walk:

'Sh! keep still an' don't you talk!

Got you! Don't you dailh to squawk,

Hi, oh, my lady!

THE STORY OF IGNATIUS, THE ALMONER

By Herman Knickerbocker Viélé

Author of "The Inn of the Silver Moon," "Myra of the Pines," Etc.

THOUGH this happened at the Butler Penfields' garden party, the results concern Miss Mabel Dunbar more than any one else, except, perhaps, one other. Mabel had been invited, as she was invited everywhere, partly because she was a very pretty girl, and helped to make things go, and partly through public policy.

"So long as the dear child remains unmarried," Mrs. Fessenden had said, "we must continue to buy our tea from her."

For Mabel owed her amber draperies to the tea she sold and everybody bought because her grandmother had lived on Washington Square. In society, to speak of tea was to speak of Mabel Dunbar; to look in Mabel's deep brown eyes was to think of tea, and, incidentally, of cream and sugar.

"I used to consider her clever," Mrs. Fessenden remarked, "until she became so popular with clever men. . . . It is really most discouraging. . . . See, there is Lena Livingston, who has read Dante, pretending to talk to her own brother-in-law, while Mabel, who is not even married, walks off with Archer Ferris and Horace Hopworthy, one on each side."

"I do wonder what she talks to them about," speculated Mrs. Penfield, and Mrs. Fessenden replied:

"My dear, you may depend, they do not let her talk."

Mrs. Penfield reflected, while three backs, two broad and one slender and sinuous as a tea-plant, receded toward the shrubbery.

"I wonder which one Mabel will come back with?" she said.

"If Jack were here, he would give odds on Mr. Hopworthy," replied Jack's wife.

"Of course, Mr. Hopworthy is the coming man," observed Mrs. Penfield. "But Mr. Ferris has 'arrived.'"

"Yes," assented Mrs. Fessenden, "as Jack says, he has arrived and taken all the rooms. . . . But, then, I have great faith in Mr. Hopworthy. You know Jack's aunt discovered him."

"Yes," said Mrs. Penfield, "I remember, but, Clara, it was you that introduced him."

"Oh, that was nothing," murmured Clara. "We were very glad——"

"My two best men!" sighed Mrs. Penfield, her eyes upon the shrubbery, where nothing now was to be seen.

"Yes," acquiesced her friend, "but think how badly that last Ceylon turned out."

Meanwhile, the three had found a cool retreat, an arbor sheltered from the sun and open to the air, wherein a rustic garden seat, a table and a chair extended cordial invitations.

"Ah, this is just the place!" cried Archer Ferris. "By shoving this seat along a trifle, and putting this chair here, we can be very comfortable."

It was noticeable that Mr. Ferris retained possession of the chair. As for the vacant place beside her on the bench, Mabel's parasol lay upon it. Mr. Ferris beamed as only the arrived can beam.

"With your permission, I will take the

table," said Mr. Hopworthy, looking to Miss Dunbar, who smiled. Mr. Ferris became overcast.

"I fear our conversation may not interest you," he told the other man. "You know, you do not write short stories."

And this was not the first time in the last half hour that Mr. Ferris had offered Mr. Hopworthy an opportunity to withdraw. The latter smiled, a broad, expansive smile.

"Oh, but I read them," he persisted, perching on the table. "That is," he added, "when there is plot enough to keep one awake."

Here Mr. Ferris smiled, or, rather, pouted, for his mouth, contrasted with that of Mr. Hopworthy, seemed child-like, not to say cherubic.

"Plots," he observed, "are quite Victorian. We are, at least, decadent, are we not, Miss Mabel?"

Mabel smoothed her amber skirt, and tried to look intelligent.

"Oh, yes, indeed," she said.

"Now, there was a story in last week's *Bee* called 'Ralph Ratcliffe's Reincarnation,' continued the gentleman on the table. Did you read it, Miss Dunbar?"

"I laid it aside to read," she answered, with evasion.

"Pray don't. It's in my weakest vein," remonstrated Mr. Ferris. "One writes *down* for the *Bee*, you know."

"Pardon me," said Mr. Hopworthy, "I did not recognize the author's name as one of yours."

"No one with fewer than twelve names should call himself in literature," the other said, a little vauntingly.

Mr. Hopworthy embraced his knee.

"The plot of that story—" he had begun to say, when Mr. Ferris interrupted.

"There are but seven plots," he explained, "and thirty situations. To one that knows his trade, the outcome of a story should be from the beginning as obvious as a properly opened game of chess."

"How interesting it must be to write," put in Miss Dunbar, appreciatively. Perhaps, in her simple way, she speculated as to where the present situation came among the thirty, and whether the

sunbeam she was conscious of upon her hair had any literary value.

"Do you ever see the *Stylus*?" inquired Mr. Hopworthy, from whose position the sunbeam could be observed to best advantage.

"Sir," said Mr. Ferris, through his Boucher lips, "I may say I *am* the *Stylus*."

"Really!" cried the lady, though she could not have been greatly surprised.

In truth, her exclamation veiled the tendency to yawn often induced in the young by objective conversation. If clever people only knew a little more, they would not so often talk of stupid things.

"Ah, then it is to you we owe that spirited little *fablican* called 'The Story of Ignatius, the Almoner?'" remarked Mr. Hopworthy, almost indifferently.

"A trifle," said the other; "what we scribblers call 'hack.'"

Mr. Hopworthy's broad mouth contracted, and he might have been observed to suffer from some suppressed emotion.

"But you wrote it, did you not?" he asked, beneath his breath.

"I dashed it off in twenty minutes," said the other.

"But it was yours?" insisted Mr. Hopworthy.

"When I wrote that little story—" said Mr. Archer Ferris.

"The Story of Ignatius, the Almoner?" prompted Mr. Hopworthy, with unnecessary insistence.

"The Story of Ignatius, the Almoner," repeated Mr. Ferris, flushing slightly, while Mr. Hopworthy seemed to clutch the table to keep himself from bounding upward.

"I was convinced of it!" he cried. "No other hand could have penned it. The pith, the pathos, passion, power, and purpose of the tale were masterly, and yet it was so simple and sincere, so logical, so convincing, so inevitable, so—"

"Spare me," protested Mr. Ferris, not at all displeased. "But it had a sort of rudimentary force, I own."

"And have you read it, Miss Dun-

bar?" inquired Mr. Hopworthy, almost letting slip one anchor.

"No," she replied, "but I have laid it aside to read. I shall do so now with added pleasure."

"Unless the author would consent to tell it to us in his own inspired words——" said Mr. Hopworthy, regarding his boot toe with interest. Miss Dunbar caught at the suggestion.

"Oh, do!" she pleaded. "I should so love to hear a story told by the author."

"An experience to remember," murmured Mr. Hopworthy.

"I am afraid it would be rather too long to tell this afternoon," demurred the author, with a glance of apprehension toward the sky.

"But you dashed it off in twenty minutes," the other man reminded him.

"That is another reason," said the writer. "Work done with such rapidity is apt to leave but a slight impression on the memory."

"Perhaps a little turn about the grounds——" suggested Mr. Hopworthy.

Miss Dunbar had put up her amber parasol, and the lace about it fell just across her eyes. This left the seat beside her free.

"Perhaps a little turn——" urged Mr. Hopworthy again. Mr. Ferris regarded him defiantly.

"As you have read my story, sir," he said, "I can scarcely hope to include you in my audience."

"But it is not at all the sort of thing one is satisfied to hear but once," Mr. Hopworthy declared, in a tone distinctly flattering. Mr. Ferris moved uneasily.

"I really forget how it began," he asserted. "Perhaps another time——"

"If I might presume to jog your memory——" said Mr. Hopworthy, with deference.

"Oh, that would be delightful!" exclaimed Miss Dunbar. "With two such story-tellers, I feel just like Lalla Rookh."

Mr. Ferris was upon his feet at once.

"I suggest we adjourn to the striped tent," he said; "they have all sorts of ices there."

"Oh, but I mean the Princess, not

frozen punch," declared Mabel, settling herself more securely in the corner of the garden seat. "Please sit down, and begin by telling me exactly what an almoner is."

Mr. Ferris hesitated, cast one glance toward the open lawn beyond the shrubbery, another to the amber parasol, and sat down in the other corner. Mr. Hopworthy slipped from the table to the vacant chair.

"An almoner," explained the *Stylus*, in as nearly an undertone as the letter of courtesy permitted, "is a sort of treasurer, you know. . . . In a monastery, you understand. . . . The monk who distributes alms and that sort of thing."

"Oh, then it is a mediæval story!" cried Mabel. "How delightful!"

"No, modern," corrected Mr. Hopworthy.

"Modern in setting, though mediæval in spirit," said Mr. Ferris, taking off his hat.

"Ah, that, indeed!" breathed Mr. Hopworthy. "I shall not soon forget your opening description; that picture of the old cathedral, lighted only by the far, faint flicker of an occasional taper, burning before some shrined saint. I can see him now, *Ignatius*, the young monk, as he moves in silence from one to another of the alms-boxes, gathering into his leathern bag the offerings that have been deposited by the faithful."

"I think he had a light," suggested the author of short stories, who was listening, critically.

"Of course; a flaming torch."

"How sweet of him!" Mabel murmured, and Mr. Hopworthy went on.

"There were twelve boxes—were there not?—upon as many pillars, and in each box, in addition to the customary handful of copper *sons*, there lay, as I recall it, a silver coin——"

"You will perceive the symbolism," the author whispered.

"It is perfect," sighed Mabel.

"Never had such a thing occurred before," continued Mr. Hopworthy, who appeared to know the story very well, "and in the solitude of his cell, *Ignatius* sat for hours contemplating the riches

that had so strangely come into his hand. His first thought was of the poor, to whom, of right, the alms belonged; but, when he recalled the avarice of *The Abbot*, his heart misgave him——

"Rather a striking situation. I thought," remarked the writer. "Go on a little further, please."

"I wish I could," said Mr. Hopworthy, but this is where your keen analysis comes in, your irresistible logic. I confess you went a shade beyond my radius of thought."

"Perhaps," admitted the other. "Very likely." But he had now caught the spirit of his own production, and, turning to his neighbor, he went on to explain:

"My purpose was to present a problem, to suggest a conflict of emotions, quite in the manner of Huysmans. Should *The Abbot*, who is but the type of sordid wisdom, be consulted, or should *The Almoner*, symbolizing self, obey the higher call of elementary impulse?"

"And which did *Ignatius* do?" Mabel asked.

"I fear you fail to catch my meaning," said the author. "It is the soul-struggle we are analyzing——"

"But he must have come to some conclusion?"

"Not necessarily," said Mr. Ferris, gravely. "A soul-struggle is continuous, it goes on——" Mr. Ferris waved his white hand toward infinity.

"But did not *Ignatius* decide to put the money where it would do the most good?" inquired Mr. Hopworthy.

"The phrase is yours," responded Mr. Ferris, "but it conveys my meaning dimly."

"As I recall the story," the other went on, "he resolved to sacrifice his own prejudices to the service of his fellow-creatures. But, when he thought of all who stood in need—the peasants tilling the fields, the sailors on the sea, the soldiers in the camp—he decided that it would be better to confine the benefit to one deserving object."

"A very sensible decision," Mabel opined, and Mr. Ferris muttered:

"Yes, that was my idea."

As the voices of the garden came to them on the summer breeze, he made a movement to consult his watch.

"You see my little problem," he observed. "The rest is immaterial."

"But I so liked the part where the young monk, filled with his noble purpose, stole from the monastery by night," said Mr. Hopworthy. "Ah, there was a touch of realism."

"I'm glad you fancied it," replied the author, relapsing into silence.

Mabel tapped the gravel with her foot; it is strange how audible a trifling sound becomes at times.

"Please tell me what he did," she begged. "I never heard a story in which so little happened."

The writer of short stories bit his full red lip, and sat erect.

"The young monk waited till the house was wrapped in sleep," he said, almost defiantly, it seemed. "Then, drawing the great bolt, he went out into the night. The harvest moon was in the sky, and——"

"It rained, I think," suggested Mr. Hopworthy.

"No matter if it did," rejoined the other. "Unmindful of the elements, he wound his cowl about him, and pressed on, fearlessly, into the forest, hearing nothing, seeing nothing. Mile after mile he strode—and strode—and strode—until—until—it was time to return——"

"You forget the peasant festival," prompted Mr. Hopworthy.

"Festival?" said Mr. Ferris. "Ah, that was a mere episode, intended to give a sense of contrast."

"Of course," Mr. Hopworthy assented. "How frivolous beside his own austere life appeared these rustic revels. How calm, by contrast, was the quiet of the cloister——"

"Yes," Mr. Ferris took up the screech, "and, as from a distance he watched their clumsy merriment, he—he—he——"

"He determined to have just one dance for luck," assisted Mr. Hopworthy.

Perhaps the author, thus hearing the story from another, detected here some flaw of logic, for he did not proceed at once, although Miss Dunbar waited with the most encouraging interest. The momentary pause was put to flight by Mr. Hopworthy.

"Ah, Zola never did anything more daring," he declared. "Even Zola might have hesitated to make *Ignatius* change clothes with the intoxicated soldier, and leaping into the middle of the ballroom, shout that every glass must be filled to the brim."

"Hold on!" gasped Mr. Ferris. "There must be some mistake. I swear I never wrote anything like that in my life."

"But you have admitted it!" the other cried. "You cannot conceal it from us now. You are grand. You are sublime!"

"I deny it, absolutely," returned Mr. Ferris.

"Please stop discussing, and let me hear the rest," Mabel pouted. "Do go on, Mr. Ferris."

"I can't," said Mr. Ferris, sadly. "My story has been garbled by the printer."

"But the waltz," urged Mr. Hopworthy. "Surely, that waltz was yours."

Perhaps once more the irresistible logic of events became apparent, for, with an effort, Mr. Ferris said:

"Oh, yes, that waltz was mine. Enraptured by its strains, and giddy with the fumes of wine, *The Almoner* floated in a dream of sensuous delight till suddenly he recalled—suddenly he recalled—"

"If you will pardon another interruption," put in Mr. Hopworthy, "he did nothing of the sort. Suddenly, as you must remember, word was brought that *The Abbot* was dead, and that *Ignatius* had been elected in his place."

"You spoil my climax, sir," the author cried. "Dashing the wine cup from his lips, *Ignatius* rushed into the night—"

"But he could not find the soldier anywhere," Mr. Hopworthy interposed.

"Why should he want to find the confounded soldier?" demanded the narrator, fiercely.

"Why, to get his cowl, of course."

"Splendid!" exclaimed Mabel, clapping her hands.

"He—he——" the author stammered, and again the other lent a friendly tongue to say:

"*Ignatius* returned to the monastery at once. And what should he discover there but *The Soldier*, seated in the chair of office, presiding at the council. But, see here, old chap, perhaps you had better finish your own story yourself?"

"Sir!" cried the author, springing to his feet, "I detect your perfidy, and I call this about the shabbiest trick one gentleman ever attempted to play upon another. I shall not hesitate to denounce you far and wide as one capable of the smallest meanness!"

"That is what *The Almoner* told *The Soldier*," Mr. Hopworthy explained to Mabel, in a whisper, but the other, becoming almost violent, went on:

"You are unfit, sir, to associate with people of refinement, and, when I meet you alone, it will give me a lively satisfaction to repeat the observation!"

"That is what *The Soldier* replied to *The Almoner*," Mr. Hopworthy again explained. But the other gentleman had lifted his hat, and was moving rapidly toward the striped tent, where ices were to be had.

"I shall never forgive him for leaving the story unfinished," announced the lady of the bench. "And, don't you think his manner toward the end was rather strange?"

Mr. Hopworthy sighed, and shook his head.

"Those magazine men are all a trifle odd," he said. "Does not that parasol fatigue your hand?"

"Yes, you may hold it, if you like," she answered. "I am glad everybody does not tell stories."

DIFFICULT PEOPLE

By Elia W. Peattie

WHO is the difficult person? Forsooth, he is the person of exaggerated virtues. The vicious person is in no way difficult; he is merely impossible—which simplifies matters.

Nothing is easier to deal with than vice. Has not society devised a thousand schemes for the punishment, the suppression and the encouragement of it? May it not, indeed, be looked upon as a sort of sociological success, giving employment to many worthy persons who might otherwise be idle, such as judges, novelists, dramatists, policemen, attorneys and reformers?

But emphasize a virtue by ever so little—add one featherweight to the average of goodness, increase by a gill the quantity of the milk of human kindness, add an ounce of enthusiasm, an ohm of magnetism, a centimeter of psychic power—and you have the Difficult Person.

Suppose your dearest friend to be a sensitive person. You meet her and extend a friendly greeting. You are truly glad to see her, but not electrified; and she wishes you to be electrified, though it may be that certain things have happened to you in your life, such as the slow passage of the years and a surplus of emotional experiences, which make it unlikely that you will ever be electrified again. Your friend asks how she has offended you. You deny that she has. She says she senses a difference. You assure her that she senses nothing but the spirit of work rather than the spirit of sentiment, and that you find it hard to be sentimental immediately after breakfast. She says you have so much to make you happy. You admit it, but

say you can't help that. You manage to get away—and send her some violets. The violets ease the situation, and she is sentimentally glad and you gladly free for three days.

Then there is your self-respectful friend. A terrible virtue to exaggerate, self-respect! Nothing is such an abominable nuisance. You ask your friend to dinner. She will not accept. She is not in a position to return your hospitality, she says, and therefore she will receive no favors. She takes pains to quote to you the maxim that it is much more blessed to give than to receive; and she congratulates you elaborately on your prosperity, and you, who are really as poor as a mouse, leave her with a feeling of insufferable plutocracy and unutterable vulgarity, aching in all your bones with a sort of spiritual grip.

Then there is your dignified friend. Dignity is, indeed, the last resort of mediocrity, the mask of the man without humor, the shield of the person who lacks adaptability. What gloom the dignified person can throw over an assemblage; with what ruthless vandalism he can break the point of a joke! How poor, mean and ill-kept does he make your gay toy-and-book-littered sitting-room seem; how meager your little holiday feast; how he does fluster your one trembling little servant, so that the jelly quakes in her hand and the coffee is spilled on his august coat!

But not less disconcerting is the purist—the creature who addresses you in irreproachable English, who preserves the unsplit infinitive, who employs the conspicuous euphemism, who possesses the adequate and ready-on-tap vocabu-

lary. How the joy departs from the conversation and the anecdote lags on reluctant feet before this formidable use of over-perfect English! How much more do you love the man with the human hesitation in his speech, the one with a sociable misuse of his words, to whom syntax is not second nature, and who takes his prepositions, like his *café noir*, at the end of things!

And, behold! there is the truth-teller, the person of unrestrained candor, the unrelenting appreciator of facts. "I notice, madam," says the photographer, "that your nose slants a good deal to one side, and that when you laugh your mouth goes up on one side and down on the other." "Your poor father," says Aunt Jane, "never did give his children any advantages. I never laid your ignorance up against you at all; I never thought you were to blame." Truthful souls! In heaven shall be your reward.

Then there is the abider. Ah! more subtle than the serpent is the abider. You arise briskly in the morning and lay out the sixteen precious working hours of the day, eat your breakfast, get into a fine glow of activity—when the card of

the abider is brought to you. He or she enters, and the hours pass; the first one golden, perhaps the second silver, the third lead, the fourth slag—the mere dump and refuse of life; the waste, the residuum!

And there is the genius, who scares you to death when he accepts your invitation to tea; and the silent one, who comes to call once a month, and who never does more than respond to your remarks. And there are the people who think you understand their peculiar souls, when you don't; and the people who say they understand yours, when, by Minerva, goddess of wisdom, they do nothing of the sort!

There remains the most difficult person of all—the most irritating, perplexing, baffling, hectoring, disappointing being above ground—one's self. For what blunders, follies, stupidities and shames is he responsible! Ah, of what profanities, what obliquities, what fathom-deep ignorance is he guilty! How far from difficult seem all persons compared with this most difficult one—this constant companion, from whose poor society it is never possible to free one's self!



LONELINESS

BLIND night that gathers on the window glass.
 Chill sodden lands without, and trackless ways.
 A soul within, that kneels with hungry gaze
 And face against the pane and only sees
 The formless dark, and hears amid the trees
 The sighing of the rain amid the grass.

ALBERT BIGELOW PAINE.

THE MARQUIS DIFFERS

By Alfred Sutro

SCENE—*The boudoir of the Marquise de Verny, in her husband's hotel in the Boulevard St. Germain. The Marquise, an exquisite brunette of twenty-two, is attired in a bewildering ball dress. There is a knock at the door, and the Marquis enters. He is a good-looking, soldierly man, some ten years her senior.*

MARQUIS—Good-evening, my dear Adrienne. Ah, how beautiful you are! ADRIENNE (*with a low courtesy*)—I am glad my lord is pleased.

MARQUIS—Pleased! You dazzle me. May I sit down?

ADRIENNE—The carriage is waiting, René. Pay me all your compliments quickly, for I must go.

MARQUIS (*sitting*)—The night is very cold, there is snow in the air. And it is so pleasant in here! Why not stay with me?

ADRIENNE—I hear the dance music already.

MARQUIS—I have a curious desire that we two should spend the evening together. Will you gratify my caprice?

ADRIENNE—My dear René, you are not serious?

MARQUIS—But I am, indeed; as I laid down my cards at the club I said to myself, "I will go home, and ask my little wife to give up her ball for me—"

ADRIENNE—It is impossible!

MARQUIS—Marie Antoinette once told an ancestor of mine that she had a favor to ask. He replied: "If it is possible, Madame, it is done already; if it is impossible, it shall be done." Come, be a good princess, and humor your husband.

ADRIENNE—My dear René, do not tease me. And we are keeping the horses waiting in the cold. Will you see me to my carriage?

MARQUIS—Truly I am the most unfortunate of men. At cards luck was against me; and here I am once more unsuccessful. Do you pity me?

ADRIENNE—Because your wife has to go to a ball?

MARQUIS—Ah, Adrienne, should I not be distressed at your refusing to grant me so small a favor? Dance with me to-night—your words shall be the music, and my kiss the prize in the cotillon.

ADRIENNE—You are sentimental to-night, Monsieur le Marquis.

MARQUIS—As I passed through the Champs Elysées this morning, I saw the first bud of blossom on the chestnuts. And I suppose that a tiny shoot has flowered in my heart, too. And, although I have had a very busy day, I could never quite shut out from my memory that morning in spring, five years ago, when little Adrienne first put her timid hand in mine.

ADRIENNE—Come, my dear René, bid me good-by; I must really be going.

MARQUIS—How shall I express my most profound regret? See, I felt so sure that I could persuade you—I so much overrated my powers—and the evening is so cold—and Baptiste has harnessed my favorite English mares—

ADRIENNE (*a trifle impatiently*)—Well?

MARQUIS—That I was venturesome enough to countermand the carriage—

Adrienne's eyes flash indignation; she makes a swift movement to the bell; the Marquis intercepts her, takes her hand, bears it very gallantly to his lips, and leads her to a seat.

MARQUIS—Do not ring, my dear Adrienne—I am sure you have no wish to go to this ball to-night.

ADRIENNE (*suppressing her anger*)—Marquis, this is incomprehensible to me; and I truly cannot suffer—

MARQUIS—See how considerate I have been! I even went so far as to send a message to the Vernouailles to say that you had caught a slight cold, and must take care of yourself, in view of our own ball here to-morrow.

ADRIENNE (*fiercely*)—You did this?

MARQUIS—Ah, dear Adrienne, do not overwhelm me with gratitude. Am I not always thoughtful for you? But come, sit down. Let us talk. I have had a busy day. Are you not curious to know how I have spent my day?

ADRIENNE (*fanning herself*)—More profitably, I trust, than you have spent your evening.

MARQUIS (*laughing*)—Ah, you shall judge. My dear, I have fought a duel.

ADRIENNE (*alarmed*)—A duel!

MARQUIS—As you see, I have returned safe and sound. My adversary has not been quite so fortunate. I am afraid that his left lung will never quite forget that my sword passed through it.

ADRIENNE—What was the cause of this duel?

MARQUIS—You are aware, my dear Adrienne, that politics interest me but little. Still, I am a stanch Royalist; and too many of my ancestors have shed their blood for our kings for me to tolerate a reflection upon the House of France. It was an insulting remark upon the late Comte de Paris that led to the duel. As you see, all proper secrecy has been observed, but the news will, of course, be in the papers to-morrow.

ADRIENNE—Who was your adversary?

MARQUIS—Who? Ah—have no fear—a person you know very slightly. Have I your permission to smoke a little cigarette? (*Adrienne nods; he rises, takes a cigarette out of his case and proceeds to light it, with his back half turned to her.*) It was the Vicomte de Marly.

Adrienne starts violently, and grips her chair. The Marquis sits again, and smiles benevolently at her.

MARQUIS—I see that the mere thought of the danger to which I have

been exposed has turned you quite pale, my dear Adrienne. But let me reassure you. Marly is a good fencer; though, I fancy, not quite my equal. It was a very pretty pass in *quarte* that vanquished him; and, truly, I am rather proud of it.

ADRIENNE—And—his—wound?

MARQUIS—Oh, not at all dangerous! He will have to keep to his bed for six weeks or so, and then go to the south. As I say, that one lung will never be quite the same; but, then, he has two. And, by the way, I am sure you are glad now that you have not gone to the Vernouailles to-night. For, of course, the duel will be spoken of there.

ADRIENNE (*nervously*)—The cause is well known?

MARQUIS—My dear child, what a curious question! Monsieur de Marly permitted himself a reflection upon the late chief of the house we serve; and my father's son had naturally to defend his king. The Vicomte refused to apologize, and I was unable to withdraw the remark that I had let fall in my anger. So we settled our little difference in the woods of Vincennes; and the slight difficulty he will in the future experience in breathing will induce him henceforth to speak more respectfully of princes— You still look pale, my dear Adrienne. Where can I find your salts?

ADRIENNE—Thank you; I do not need them; I am quite well.

MARQUIS—You do not congratulate me on my success!

ADRIENNE—I tremble to think what might have happened. . . .

MARQUIS—It was a curious thing—I never had such mastery over my sword. It seemed to be alive, to act of itself; I was a mere spectator—the judge. The duel had scarcely begun when I saw that De Marly was at my mercy. He made a rash thrust, and exposed his chest—and the sword whispered to me, "The heart or the lung?" You have no idea of the temptation there was to choose the heart. All the savagery that lies at the bottom of us urged me to kill. And I knew that Marly was a worthless man, of whom the world

would be well rid. But I refrained—and am glad—for your sake.

ADRIENNE (*starting*)—Mine!

MARQUIS—They would have prosecuted me, you know; and, although I should have been acquitted, it is always a disagreeable period for one's wife; she has unhappy fears that her husband may be sent to prison. So, as the English poet says, "All's well that ends well." He fought bravely enough—I must do him that justice—and escapes with a little hole in the lung. Ah, how pleasant it is, in this room! Say something to me, Adrienne.

ADRIENNE—What shall I say?

MARQUIS—Oh, has it come to this? Nay, I cannot find the words to put on your lips. But think of it—we have only been married a very few years, and already you know not what you should say to me!

ADRIENNE—Réné—my head is heavy—I think I will go to my room—

MARQUIS—I entreat you to stay with me. I am in the humor to talk—and, besides, there is something, I know, that I wished to ask of you. Oh, yes, I have it! What novels have you been reading lately, my dear Adrienne?

ADRIENNE—Truly, I cannot tell—several, I fancy—but why do you ask?

MARQUIS—Because I am certain that one of them must have made a marked impression upon you. Oh, I am sure of it! One that was very sentimental—and, if I may say so without offending you—not very true to life. Shall I tell you the plot? There is a heroine, a very sweet and noble woman, devoted in her heart to her husband and her little son; and she condescends, in her eagerness for amusement, to listen to the advances of a very dishonorable and paltry man—

ADRIENNE—Réné!

MARQUIS—You marvel at my guessing the plot of your book? My dear friend, I will tell you more. I will even indicate the chapter that most impressed you. It is the one where the man has had the audacity to make insolent proposals to the lady; and she, although indignant, is vaguely flattered at being selected by this hero of many

adventures. So she writes him a letter; and, although every word of it breathes her loyalty and honor, the letter is still a foolish one for a woman of her character to write to a man of his.

Adrienne buries her head in her hands.

MARQUIS—You had been reading this with great interest, my dear Adrienne—and it amused you so much that you made a copy of that letter! And, in your absent-mindedness, carried away by your admiration for the author's idea, you put your letter in an envelope, and addressed it to the one really contemptible person of our acquaintance! By the most curious coincidence it chanced to fall into my hands; and, as I was certain a mistake had been made, I have brought it back to you. But it never occurred to you, little realist that you are, that the letter might have actually been posted, and received by the odious person!

ADRIENNE—Do you forgive me?

MARQUIS—For your poor taste in fiction? I am, perhaps, a little to blame. For it appears to me that, had I devoted more of my time to you, you would not have felt the same interest in this class of novel. Oh, I think I have been to blame.

ADRIENNE—Would you like to know how the novel ended, Réné?

MARQUIS—I fancy I can guess—

ADRIENNE—The lady's husband punished the worthless man—as he deserved to be punished.

MARQUIS—Really? I am glad of that.

ADRIENNE—And he behaved so chivalrously and magnanimously to the foolish wife—that she—loved him more than ever she had loved him before—and was never foolish again in all her life—

MARQUIS—Truly, the end of that story atones for much that I disliked in the beginning. And, tell me—did the lady not so much as embrace her husband?

Adrienne flings her arms around him, and the Marquis smiles.

THE TENAYA WATER HAZARD

By John M. Oskison

IT was raining as I stepped from the Overland Flyer at the little Colorado hill station of River Junction, and, as Phil Cochrane sprang forward to welcome me, he seized my caddy-bag and thrust the protruding ends of my golf clubs under the flap of his rubber coat.

"It does me good to see your old face, Gerry," Phil cried, heartily, hustling me under shelter of the station waiting-room. Then in the same breath: "Here, bring the clubs into my bedroom and dry 'em!" That was the old Phil, certainly, the old quick, spontaneous welcome to a friend, and the familiar adoration of a bright, supple golf club. He was busy with my driver in a minute, swinging the long "tender" stick in the narrow space between his cot and the wall, weighing it and admiring its balance.

"New one, isn't it, Gerry?" Phil interrupted me to ask. "Remember our great match with Harrison and Wynne?" I laughed to hide the pity in my tone. Poor old Phil! That match had been played over the Empire City links in October, '99, and here he was recalling it as the freshest golfing memory of November 01. We had been chums at college ten years ago, and had gone down to New York together, where we had both won responsible positions in the Transcontinental offices. For six years we had been fellow-members of the Empire City Club, had golfed together, and been almost as chummy as in those four years at Harvard.

Then Phil had broken down. The doctors said consumption, and ordered him off to the mountains of Colorado. The Transcontinental people made him

agent at River Junction, gave him a half-breed Mexican assistant to do the work, and a salary big enough to keep two ponies. Phil had been there two years when I got a six-months' leave of absence, and went to spend it on the Pacific Coast. When I told my friend that my stay with him must be limited to three days his disappointment was tragic—until I explained that Miss Helen Trast was then at her father's big Southern California winter home, and had written to say that she would be delighted to go over the Coronado links with me on Saturday.

"Of course, then, Gerry, you can't possibly stay more than three days," agreed Phil, and over his face passed a shadow, half-wistful, wholly regretful. I was sorry for poor old Phil.

We spent the afternoon chatting and smoking beside the little office stove, for the steady pour of the rain and the sharp mountain air had made a fire very comfortable. Inevitably, we drifted into golfing reminiscences, my companion voicing, in his impulsive way, the hunger of an enthusiast for his clubs. He had stuck to his post manfully, and his hands had been for two years strangers to the feel of a willing stick. He told me of his life at the lonely station, broken by short visits to the mining camps in the mountains, and to the cattle ranches in the plain that rolled out from the mountain base toward Kansas. There had been one short period of activity and excitement, when the heavy rains and melting snow had carried away the Transcontinental bridge across the Tenaya River, a precipitous, steep-walled stream that was dry ten months in the year and a seething flood during the other two.

"They've put a steel arch there now," said Phil, "that they're willing to back against the Brooklyn Bridge for permanence, so there's no more fun with bridge-builders."

"I should think," I ventured, "that if this rain continues it might wash away even a Brooklyn Bridge." We were lying half-asleep then, I in Phil's bed and he stretched on an improvised cot on the floor, listening to the steady beat of the rain on the shingles, not so far from our noses.

"'Twon't budge this one," said my friend, drowsily, and, in a minute, he was sound asleep.

Next morning Phil went out to his stable to look after his two ponies—the Mexican was not allowed to touch them. The exile had come to love those two beasts, and when he went to feed and rub them, he left me to an hour of strange, oppressive loneliness. I began to understand what a trial Phil's had been. The Mexican was half asleep, the rain was driving my thoughts into a gloomy channel. I felt that I must, somehow, get into touch with the world. Naturally, I looked forward to the end of my journey, to my meeting with Miss Trast. The idea of sending her a telegram, merely to say that I'd be there in time for the match on Saturday, occurred to me, and I was immensely cheered. I roused Pedro, gave him my message, crowded a dollar into his hand, and bade him send it off at once.

I had secretly hoped for a word in answer, but the message that Pedro delivered at noon, with an apologetic grin, contained more than the conventional acknowledgment. I read it, then handing it over to Phil, remarked: "You'll have a chance to see her mother." Phil grinned sympathetically, as he read:

"Glad you telegraphed. Watch for mother, East-bound, Wednesday evening."

"HELEN TRAST."

"When does that train reach here?" I asked.

"That's number four," replied Phil.

"It gets here at five-ten. That's this evening, isn't it?" He showed me the train schedule tacked to his door.

Immediately—foolishly, as Phil said—I began to worry about that bridge. I tormented him with questions as to its safety until he bundled himself and me into raincoats and rubber boots for a tramp out on the rain-gutted mountainside and a visit to the bridge.

It was glorious to splash through the tiny, racing torrents and furrow the shallow little lakes, to meet the steady, driving rain that beat in our faces. We tramped down to the plain; then, going west to the canyon, followed it up to the railroad crossing; then beyond, up the mountain, where the water was rising rapidly in the river and plunging down in a swirling yellow flood.

Half a mile up the mountainside across the river from where we stood, a couple of 'dobe huts nestled. We saw a dozen Mexicans, men and women, standing outside, watching the eager current in the river and gossiping aimlessly as they splashed through the mud and rain about their hovels. Cochrane told me that the men worked in a mine farther up the mountainside.

The rain continued to come down in a steady pour until the middle of the afternoon, when the clouds passed on to the lower plain, and the sun came out to shine pale upon the water-gutted mountainside. A noticeable crispness was in the air, and had there been dry ground under foot, it would have been a perfect late autumn afternoon.

It was past four o'clock when we sallied out again in hip-boots. My nervousness would not let me stay indoors, and the bracing air was invitation enough to call the most phlegmatic out of doors. We started bravely up the mountain, but, half aimlessly, half because of my subconscious fears, we veered over to the river and, going down to the bridge, once more passed the skylarking Mexicans. Phil shouted at them some words of Spanish, but, of course, the sound of his voice was lost in the noise of the flood.

As we went, I noticed that the river had risen incredibly fast in the few

hours since we saw it last. Phil noticed it, too (sooner than I, no doubt), and I could see that it troubled him, in spite of his laughing assurance that the bridge was as safe as a rock cave.

Cochrane dawdled a minute on a big, flat-top boulder by the river bank, stretched himself, with an assumption of lazy indifference, and remarked:

"Gerry, wouldn't this be a day for golf! And couldn't we have a links here that would make the Empire City eighteen look like a parlor baseball game!" Pleased at the idea, Phil continued, enthusiastically: "Make this rock the first tee, drive across the river there—Gad! I think even you would lose a few balls in that hazard, Gerry—brassy down the mountain and hole out by the bridge. After that, drive down into the plain. . . ." My friend went on, with his extravagant fancy, until he had laid out six holes; then, as he said, he had to take the train to get home in time for dinner.

I could see, as we walked down to the bridge, that Cochrane's air of assurance was assumed, and that he was talking *at* me for effect; for, unconsciously, he increased the length of his stride—and Phil was a good walker, even as an office grind. His glance sought often the turbid flood creeping up the canyon walls, and he forgot to go on whistling the year-before-last tune that had been running in his mind.

Where the gorge began to contract, and just before we came into view of the bridge, Phil was fairly running away from me, and, when I saw, I didn't wonder. The water lacked but three or four feet of running over the banks! My friend looked back across his shoulder to shout:

"Come on, Gerry! I'm damned if it doesn't seem shaky!" As he spoke, we dropped over the last shoulder of hill, and saw the yellow flood seething between the bridge piers with a force that seemed irresistible. Already it was beginning to cut away the banks on the landward side, and the water that had hissed and struggled in the ironwork of the span's substructure now went racing through the new channels. But these

could not carry the ever-increasing volume long, and, while we watched, fascinated, the yellow giant was fighting the steel structure again, covering the railroad tracks and straining at the pier anchors.

It seemed an eternity that we watched, spellbound, awed by the tremendous show, never realizing that action was necessary. In reality, it was no more than ten minutes. Finally, Phil pulled himself up with a gasp, and, turning toward the station, began to run, calling back to me:

"Follow me, Gerry! We must telegraph—to save the train! Hurry, hurry!" With the shout, I came back to a realization of my fear; and, in the second flash of consciousness, I remembered that Miss Trast's mother was on that train now rushing out of the West, and due at the swaying bridge in less than three-quarters of an hour! I panted after Cochrane, cursing the heavy wading boots that clogged my feet.

A great, sullen, booming, half splash and half groan of wrenched steel brought us both to a sudden stand, and face about. Hardly had we turned, when we saw that great arch plunge from its moorings, reversing awkwardly as it settled mightily in a smother of foam and a fountain of spray.

Phil stood, dazed, for half a minute; then he swore—great, mouth-filling oaths—and sprinted on toward the station. As I came up, breathless, I found the Mexican assistant pounding frantically at the telegraph-key. Phil was watching, with wide-open eyes, and, as the dull click of the metal tips fell on his ears, he turned to me.

"The wires are down, Gerry," he said. "They've had 'em strung on the bridge structure since the new bridge was put over. The fools! They said it was safe as the Brooklyn Bridge." But it was not Phil's way to moan helplessly over a situation, like the impotent Mexican at the unresponsive key.

"God knows, Gerry," Cochrane said, gravely, "it's a gamble whether we can save that train! But we'll try. Come on." He was off again, going up the

mountainside with the speed of a goat. I followed, blindly, gaspingly, wonderingly. When I came up to him at last, he was standing at the very edge of the canyon, on the flat rock that had held us twenty minutes before, waving his arms in extravagant pantomime and shouting impotently to the stupid Mexicans on the opposite bank.

Here was the way, I thought, to warn that train—the easy, natural way—and Phil had hit upon it at once. There is always a way, I reflected, comfortably, glad to be done with the heart-breaking race up the mountain, always one way. But, in this case, only one; for who could cross that plunging, turbid flood and live? And what human could ride forty miles in thirty minutes to the bridge in the valley and back?

My reflections were broken by a despairing curse from Cochrane's lips. I followed his frantic gesture with my eyes, and saw the group of stupid peons, gathered at the flood's other edge, standing huddled and jabbering in dumb show, like a flock of voiceless geese. Now and then they shouted queries across to us. I could see the anxious question in their gestures, though, of course, no word came to our ears. Phil turned a set, haggard face to me, and said, tragically:

"My God, Gerry, won't they understand!" Then he rehearsed the pantomime again, pointing down stream, swaying himself, rocking his arms, and throwing himself down—until I could actually see that great steel arch totter and plunge. But the Mexicans would not understand, until—one must have guessed that my friend was drunk, for they all broke out laughing and clapping their hands, as if in encouragement.

When Phil realized that they were ridiculing him, a moment of utter despair came to him. He sank to the rock moaning, like a little child. To the Mexicans, that was another phase of the Gringo's delirium. They laughed and applauded. It was a terrible situation—the sun slanting down brilliantly on the muddy earth, the holiday-making Mexicans diverted by a madcap station-agent, a helpless, sensitive man counting

the seconds, impotent to save a trainload of human beings still miles away from danger!

Presently, Phil faced round to me, a ghostly twinkle of humor in his eyes, to say:

"Gerry, those fools would have to have due notice, in black and white, printed plain in Spanish, and delivered by the postman, of the fact that the Transcontinental bridge across the Tenaya River is now down, washed away, and useless for further railway traffic, before they could understand! Now, how under high heaven can we send 'em notice?"

The pallor that spread over poor old Phil's face, as he ended his speech, fired me to a blind, unreasoning fury against the Mexicans. I blurted out:

"I'd write it on a bullet, and shoot it into their thick hides!" It was a moment for tense melodrama. Phil's answer was double charged with the melodramatic:

"Oh, thank God! You've got it, Gerry!" His strong arms gripped my shoulders in a sudden ecstasy. "Wait here!" he gasped, and set off down the mountainside, with the speed of a wounded buck.

I thought first that my friend was insane, and that he was going for his rifle. My own brain was in a whirl. But why add frenzied slaughter to inevitable death? I started down the slope after Cochrane, calling on him to stop; but he was flying, far out of range of my voice. The running steadied my nerves, and I recalled Phil's face as he turned to grip me. It was not an insane look he gave me—only one charged with a desperate hope. He had bidden me to stay and wait. I turned, palpitating, and climbed to the rock again.

The Mexicans were still grouped on the opposite bank, gazing blankly at Phil's disappearing form. I thought to try my own powers of pantomime, and I had them choking with merriment in a minute. As I sank down, beaten, I knew what Cochrane must have felt in his moment of defeat. I stared at the lapping, yellow flood. It seemed to invite me. Why do men, standing help-

less before impending disaster, prefer suicide to the sight of the catastrophe? I think I know now!

The minutes fled; a quarter of an hour passed—a quarter of a century, rather! I shouted the breath out of my lungs, and subsided, whispering curses. I waited, staring. I shut my eyes, listening to the roar of the flood. I fingered my boot-tops, half tempted to try to swim that muddy, whirling cataract, and, when I saw Cochrane, the Mexican straining far behind, I jumped out to meet him.

When I perceived what was in Phil's hand, I stopped, rubbed my eyes, and touched my fingers to my forehead. I was crazy, certainly, for I could see it plain—that *supple-shafted driver from my golf-bag twirling in my friend's up-lifted hand!*

But no! It was my driver, and Phil was crazy. I took the club from his outstretched hand, and looked, with compassion, into his drawn face. Then he laughed outright, a merry, sane, ringing laugh, and gasped:

"Swing it, Gerry—practice!" And, in a moment of blind faith, I did as he bade me. I swung the familiar club back and forth in the tentative, experimental fashion that had become my second golfing nature, and brought it round with a pull that swept the lower rim of a circle within half an inch of the flat rock surface. "In these nerve-racking moments I was a golfer again, a familiar, willing club in my hands, at the mad behest of my friend swinging coolly at the air. I turned absently, dazed and half amused, to Phil, and saw him *hollowing the two halves of a split golf-ball!*

In less than a minute, he whipped from his pocket a flimsy, crudely-printed slip of paper, waved it frantically toward the watching Mexicans, and fitted it into the rough hollows of the gutta percha ball. Then, still in view of the Mexicans, he bound the halves of the sphere together with a small wire, crimping the twisted ends viciously with a pair of pincers.

I saw the whole wild scheme. Melodrama was gripping me fast. I shouted,

a sudden burst of relief. I embraced Phil, and called him a great general. He held up the mended ball to the sight of the gaping peons, then handed it to me, saying, quietly:

"Just drive that over to them, won't you, Gerry?" The melodrama had good actors. I took the ball, teed it on a small nipple of mud, and stood back to measure with my eye the course of its flight. A fragment of dirt obstructed the sweep of the stroke—I kneeled to brush it aside. Phil stood by, quiet, a subduing grip on the wondering, half-hysterical assistant. I made the usual preliminary wrist-swings, pulled my club far back across my shoulder, and swept it down, with a steady pull, that had a vicious lunge and a silent prayer at the end.

Until I felt the clean impact of the club against the ball, I had been of iron. Gawking galleries could never spoil a drive for me, and impending death did not now. But, when the stroke was made, I dared not look. I crumpled down on the stone, shaking like a blown leaf. The melodrama needed other actors.

"Thank God, you made it! I knew you would, Gerry!" Phil flung himself upon me, in a sudden abandonment of joy. I looked up, to see the Mexicans crowd around the tiny white sphere and pass it from hand to hand. Phil stood up, stiffening with a new fear.

"Open it, you fools!" he screamed, unthinking, for they were slow-witted beyond human comprehension. From one to the other of the group the strange thing passed, while we raged, helpless, on the rock. To save the train now was a question of moments. Unwarned, it would come rushing down the grade, swing round the shoulder of the mountain, and all the air brakes in the world couldn't save it from a quick burial in the yellow flood!

At last, the Mexican assistant saved us from despair. He saw the inspiration that moved his master. He questioned Phil, hurriedly, in Spanish, and my friend answered patiently. Then, stepping out into plainer view, Pedro made a single, simple gesture that

set half a dozen of the group tearing at the wire-bound ball, to bring out, in a trice, the printed paper.

Another minute was spent in reading what had been written by the Mexican assistant, a voiceless shout of understanding was hurled at us, and the mob, men leading, children and women trailing, rushed pell-mell down toward the railroad track. Phil and the assistant fled down our side, waving encouragement to the running Mexicans; and I followed, twirling my old driver like a drum-major on parade—except that I did not lead the procession!

It was a happy ending for our melodrama. And how absurd, how fanciful, it seemed afterward! Of course, the train was saved—a Mexican's dirty, old, red bandanna stopped it. Mrs. Trast

vowed, in a joyous hysteria, that Helen must know the part I played, and straightway telegraphed four closely written pages of eulogy and a postscript telling what I had done.

I went on to California, where I was hailed as a wonder in golfing circles. Miss Trast, privately, had asked Phil to go out and measure that drive, and, on any occasion that I happened to get off a ball that brought admiring comments from the spectators, she would remark, blandly:

"Oh, that's a short drive for Mr. Garrett! You should have seen his two-hundred-and-thirty-yards carry at the Tenaya water hazard, on the River Junction links!" Then she would smile a half-malicious, half-admiring, and wholly puzzling smile.



"AY, MADAM, IT IS COMMON"

WHEN I fell in love, for the first time I knew
 (My wounded pride may feel as it may)
 My sisterhood the whole world through
 With those I had reckoned of commoner clay.

The country-girl with her clumsy Colin,
 The nursery-maid with her soldier-man,
 The ladye-fair with her passionate poet,—
 They are all a part of the hackneyed plan.

And this is the truth I've learned to discover
 Which warms my heart to the common fry—
 That every other fool of a lover
 Is just such a commonplace fool as I!

ANNIE C. MUIRHEAD.

BEFORE THE CURTAIN GOES UP

By Marion Ashworth

"I ALWAYS feel sorry for the bridegroom," said the Best Man, feeling nervously for the ring. "Say, do I give the ring to Bob, or to the Bishop?"

"The last time I was best man," remarked the Usher, reflectively, "I gave it to the janitor. There was a register across the aisle from me, but I went out of my way to lose it down there."

"Good Lord!" gasped the Best Man, with visions of yawning registers, tearful maidens and wrathful would-be husbands before him.

"I feel sorry for the Best Man," said the Bridesmaid, who was thinking of her own wedding.

"Listen! Do my shoes creak?" began the Best Man, anxiously. "I know they'll drown all sound of the organ."

"Don't you worry, old man," consoled the Usher. "No one's going to look at you. You're not of any account at all."

"I feel as if I were seven feet high, and all feet," sighed the Best Man.

"Great Scott! You talk as if you were the whole show. One would think *you* were the Bride."

"Heaven forbid!" said the Best Man, fervently. "I suppose they'll stare at her as if she had no more feeling than a petrified oyster."

"Of course. No one else is even looked at," complained the Bridesmaid, with a sorrowful glance at her own imported flounces.

A sudden, awful thought overwhelmed the Best Man. "Say, I don't have to say anything, do I?"

"Don't you dare open your mouth, even to say Amen," said the Usher, sternly. "It would be like you, when the

Bishop says: 'Wilt thou have this woman,' and so on, to yell out, 'I will,' and so find yourself bridegroom, instead of Best Man."

The Best Man was overcome by a brilliant idea. He drew nearer the Pink Bridesmaid, and getting under the shade of her Gainsborough, whispered:

"If you were the girl—h'm!—wouldn't I, though!" Then as the Usher turned around he remarked, in an unnecessarily loud tone:

"Say, if I do anything wrong, just step on my foot, please."

The Bridesmaid addressed the Usher also, nodding her big hat to hide the pink in her cheeks. "You would most likely give a college yell and ask me what I meant."

"When I get married," began the Best Man, gazing over the Bridesmaid's head. "I am going to run away."

"Alone?" suggested the Usher, who was wondering where he had put the rice.

"We'll just skip around the corner somewhere," continued the Best Man, ignoring him haughtily, "and waltz into some parson, and say, 'Yes, I do,' to him and the sexton. No confounded bobbing up and down for me, no know-it-all fellows in pearl gloves and creaking patent leathers to guy me, no beastly march that lands you at the altar as if you were doing the cakewalk."

"Oh, but one should be prepared," remonstrated the Bridesmaid. "Fancy being married in a golf suit and dog-skin gloves."

"Fancy," insinuated the Best Man, getting nearer the Pink Gown again, "fancy being married in a"—he searched

desperately for the name and color of her frock—"what do you call it?" He touched a puff of the chiffon with awe-struck admiration. "French, of course! Well, in a magenta veiling '*point d'esprit*'."

"It is you who have *point d'esprit*," laughed the Bridesmaid, but the Best Man was in earnest.

"My yacht's down at Larchmont. We could be off in a couple of hours for the Mediterranean."

"In my magenta veil for a traveling gown?" the Bridesmaid inquired, smiling.

"Oh, don't guy me. Don't you see how serious I am? Send up for your things. We can go across, if you wish, and get all you want in Paris."

"With you to help me, what an outfit I'd have!" murmured the Bridesmaid, saucily, but as she peeped up into the Best Man's anxious, pleading eyes, she dropped her own. "It would be fun," she admitted, faintly. "Every one would be amazed. It was only yesterday I told the girls I had refused you. Bob and Margaret would collapse. Margaret is so particular in such matters."

"There's Bob now," whispered the Best Man, in desperation. "You will?"

"Looks scared blue," said the Usher, turning around from the window.

"Looks as if the dentist had been arguing with his teeth all morning," sang the Best Man, in frantic joy, for the Pink Gown had crept up close to him, so that under the big hat he had caught a glimpse of shyly happy eyes. Then the big hat nodded in quick consent, covering the eyes quite up, and leaving only a little rosebud mouth temptingly in view.

"Oh, Harry, just poke me when it's time to answer, will you?" groaned the Bridegroom, patting his hair nervously.

"Shan't be near you," said the Best Man, cheerfully.

"Good Lord, man! I shan't be all alone, shall I?"

"Of course not," retorted the Best Man, sternly. "Why, there's at least five thousand people in there now. Oh, but I'll see you through. I feel as bold as a lion."

"You're not going to be married," sighed the Bridegroom, wistfully.

"Well, I like that!" gasped the Best Man, but, warned by a pinch from the Bridesmaid, he dropped his aggressive manner and spoke mildly, his eyes fastened rapturously on the Bridegroom's necktie. "Oh, yes. Just so. This is our dress rehearsal. Performance at two-fifteen, sharp."

"Margaret is here," called the Usher, excitedly. "There's the march. Hurry. Hurry. They're waiting for you." This, as the Pink Gown vanished through the door. "All ready, fellows. Forward, now. It'll soon be over, Bob. Look as if it were your wedding, and not your funeral, man. For Heaven's sake, fellows, don't walk the lock step! You're the hardest man to marry I ever saw."

"Well, it's my first time," argued the Bridegroom, frantically fastening his gloves.

"I'd rather get married myself any day," agreed the Best Man. "Good Lord, fellows! I've lost the ring!"

The Bridegroom turned pale, the Usher livid.

"Oh, here it is," The Best Man breathed ardently. "Say, can't I put it in my mouth for safe-keeping?"

The Bridegroom assumed a threatening attitude. "And swallow it in fright at your first step? I guess not. Oh, I wish I were married and in midocean."

"So do I," said the Best Man, solemnly, sniffing the odor of roses which the Pink Gown had left behind.

"Shut up!" said the Usher, pushing them forward into the very jaws of the awaiting "five thousand."



AN UNSENT LETTER

By Julien Gordon

(Mrs. Van Rensselaer Cruger)

I.

LYONEL FIRTH was getting into his narrow iron bed in the plainly furnished bedroom which adjoined his sumptuous library. It was an epitome of the man's character that he should have no curtains to its windows, while, on the other side of the wall, were books, one volume of which had cost him half a year's earnings. This was at the beginning of his career; now that his income was larger, these wild purchases were a matter of course.

He occupied the third story of his mother's fine old house on Lafayette Square; a house historical and, as such, of value in the country of wooden railings and whitewashed ruins. The fact that he remained in the home nest, assuming none of those responsibilities which the authorities insist should be the end of love-making, evolved few complications in his existence. His mother, having ceased to insist on the curtains, accepted an eccentric son with the mixed pride and pain of the Philistine duck that has hatched out the traditional swan's egg. Early delicacy of health, now only a tradition, was an excuse for the prolonging of a bachelorhood which she openly deplored and secretly rejoiced at. Her cooing selfishness amused him.

In fact, Firth looked at all humanity from the vantage ground of a man who has the subtle art the French call *de se faire valoir*. He was tall and spare, with prematurely gray hair. His eyes were troubled and searching. His was the distinguished face women call fascinating. His in-

tellect was keen, cruelly logical, merciless in its immolation of the lying lures which nature holds out to cheat the race, and whip it into behavior. Spiritually poverty-stricken, he was not devoid of imagination. His cynicism judged others with an arrogance he was too polished to flaunt. He was acutely aware of his own and others' limitations. He possessed the gift of belittling pretenses. Vanity shivered and shrank in his presence. There were those who wriggled in their seats and felt ill at ease in his atmosphere, and drew a breath of relief when they stepped out of its exhausting chilliness. Yet they admired him. It is not in making others shine one wins their admiration, although one may win their affection.

To-night he was going to bed somewhat depressed. A late pleasant philandering with a young married woman was assuming an elegiac color. She had fallen in love with him. He couldn't imagine why, as he had given her meager encouragement. At their last meeting she had suggested elopement; being modern, she called it "bolting." Lyonel was one of those men who can give the conveying of a woman from one drawing-room to another the savor of an *enlèvement*. He thought this sufficient. She had taken him too seriously.

It is looking down that causes dizziness. This young woman was found to have a taste for peering over precipices. A quiet little flirtation is indeed difficult. Women are exacting. They will not understand that to be made love to is not to be loved. He knew that in her family there was a note of hysteria which in

one case, at least, had crossed the door-sill of madness. He would have scorned remorse as womanish and shifty, yet that incomprehensible sense of guilt, which he told himself sprang from education or indigestion, was upon him. Surely, any latent plum-pudding lurking in his system must have been dissipated by an evening of unusually absorbing study. "She is such a dear little thing," he said, aloud, as he blew out his candle, which stood on the table littered with papers at his bedside, "what a pity she is so foolish!"

It was just then that a loud ring at the bell startled the slumbering household. Shuffling feet in the corridor announced that the butler was descending. A few moments later his black visage appeared at his master's door. "A letter for you, sir, and the man says there's hurry."

A few words in a straggling hand to the effect that a woman was dying from an accident at a certain house, at a certain number, and desired to make her will. Would Mr. Firth come directly?

With a groan of annoyance, Lyonel lighted the candle and got himself into his clothes. It was ten minutes to one o'clock. The last car that would run that night was nearing the curve when he stopped to hail it. He knew it would carry him to the neighborhood he wanted. The car's only occupant was a man in evening clothes, somewhat disordered, sunk in alcoholic stupor, his mouth half open, drooling on his shirt front. His collar had the strange limpness, his hair the unkempt humidity, of the drunkard's. Lyonel from his corner looked over at him with indulgent wonder. His estimates were eminently charitable. Science and philosophy lift one to lenity.

When he reached the door of the house he looked for, he knew at once how it was. He had guessed it from the address. A colored woman opened to him, and he pushed past her into a narrow hall. On the left was a long double room divided by pillars. There was music and dancing, and some men, at a table at the back, were drinking and playing cards. Two

girls with tight belts and abundant busts stood staring from the threshold. They knew that the madame was dying, but had orders from herself that the clients should not be disturbed. Business is business, and the woman's force of habit permitted this decree. They came out, and one said to Lyonel, "Are you another doctor?" The other said, "She got burned with a lamp, curling her hair." She giggled nervously, and the first speaker rebuked her.

Lyonel bowed, and followed the colored woman upstairs. The madame lay stretched on her bed. A physician was soaking bandages in something and laying them upon her cheeks and throat. He whispered to Lyonel presently that she had inhaled some of the burning fluid, that she was *in extremis*, and that it was, at best, the matter of an hour or two.

She raised herself up and looked at him with small, bloodshot eyes, from which the lids seemed to have curled back. "I want to make my testament," she said. "Quick! there's no time." She spoke in a strangled voice.

He produced his paper and pen. It was rapidly accomplished. She left everything she possessed, absolutely, to her only brother Jean François Pierre Fisher, of St. Anatole-les-Bains, Savoie. The doctor and Lyonel witnessed the deed.

The negro girl hovered about, rolling on her heels, her round moon-face full of consternation and animal curiosity. The groans of the injured woman filled the apartment. The maid came and stood by the bed, and asked her how she felt. The first one of the girls that had spoken to Lyonel in the hall appeared at the door, in her green spotted satin gown. She looked in aimlessly, muttered some incoherent sympathy, and then returned to the drawing-rooms. The piano still pounded. Up the stairs there crept a sickly odor of tobacco, of kerosene oil, and of the cheap perfumes with which the women sprinkled their hair and handkerchiefs.

Lyonel let himself out into the cool night with the glare of those lidless

eyes haunting him. He suffered less from pity than from disgust. He stopped under a street lamp to make sure the name and address of the French lawyer at Grenoble who, she said, could find her brother, were correctly spelled.

"He has always kept me informed of his whereabouts," she had added, hoarsely. "I have not seen my brother for forty years."

II.

With his old broken-handled broom Monsieur Fisher was sweeping the leaves from the graveled plateau where his lodgers sat at little tables for their meals. Just now at four o'clock every afternoon, in the glare of a round, tired sun, a boy, a young crown-prince, came, with his gentlemen, to drink a bowl of milk. They would sit about a table, mopping their foreheads, while he called for and consumed this beverage, after which he would say to them politely, "*Messieurs, je vais lever l'ancre,*" and they would jump to their feet and obsequiously follow him into the shady alleys of the park where he liked to ramble. Lately, the Marquis de la Tourette had stopped on his bicycle and asked for a glass of white wine. In view of these august visitors, it behooved the host to keep the terrace clean. Every morning at seven he performed this task.

The park, in a corner of which the *châlet* perched, was kept in order by the gardeners of the *château*, but the bit of ground about Monsieur Fisher's domain was usually neglected, possibly because of his belated rent. The *château* itself was leased to a hard man, a *bourgeois* who knew how to revenge himself on laggard tenants. About the *châlet* the grass ran riot, the few flower beds were choked with weeds, and the trees remained uncared for, unless Monsieur Fisher himself lent a hand. As he swept and raked he could hear sounds from the windows which seemed to add a burden to his bowed shoulders. The high voice of his wife, the even

shriller tones of the *bonne*, Marie, and another muffled murmur like the gurglings of a sobbing child.

But the sobs were not those of childish innocence. They sprang from a discovery of turpitude which produced an upheaval of unusual turbulence in a *ménage* not noted for its peace. Madame Fisher emphatically belonged to the church militant, and was at this moment, abetted by her servant, engaged upon a crusade on vice which shook the very foundations of her chaste abode. Marie, through deep and fateful spying, had unearthed the fact that the only occupants of the *châlet* (except Monsieur l'Abbé, who was doing a twenty days' cure, and the American lady, who had three rooms on the forest side) were not what they represented themselves. She had discovered that Madame Brun was not the reputable wife of the Lyons journalist who had brought her there, but his temporary companion. The journalist was at present in Lyons on business, and at dawn Madame Fisher and her acolyte went up to the room of his *amie* to sweep her and all such vermin out of the house.

She was a tall, frail-looking woman, with an abundance of black curly hair, large silly blue eyes, a prominent Bourbon nose, a delicate skin and an air of great refinement. She was sitting on the side of the bed, her bare white feet dangling to the floor. Her dainty nightdress, with its frilled laces, was clutched at her throat by trembling, nervous fingers.

Awakened rudely from quiet slumbers—it is to be supposed her conscience did not trouble her overmuch—by an avalanche of insult, in which the coarse lunges of the peasant servant mingled with the keener stab of a more polished blade, she was frightened and stunned.

Even in anger Madame Fisher never forgot her academic French, her distinction of diction. No volubility made her ungrammatical. Her flood of fury found vent in admirable language.

Dazed and mortified, Madame Brun, as she was called, could only moan forth meaningless and unconvincing de-

nials. She finally burst into tears, which splashed her hands, dropping from her wide-open, staring eyes. She begged these harassing women at last, in plaintive accents, to allow her to finish her toilette, and to send for a cab. Madame Fisher suggested that she walk over to the town as she was. She could dress on the way. It wouldn't be for the first time. Marie refused to fetch the coach for her, with ribald laughter. This sign of insubordination on the part of her domestic was not, however, to the landlady's taste, and she turned upon the girl savagely, ordering her from the room. Left to confront each other, she and her lodger indulged in a few more passages-at-arms, in which, it must be confessed, the older woman exhibited little magnanimity.

Madame Fisher was not always ungenerous. In expenditure, at least, her husband and her relatives thought her magnificent; nor was she incapable, on occasion, of noble impulse. But to-day that fierce drop of malice which lies buried in the breast of every Frenchwoman sprang boiling to her lips, and she spat out all its bitterness. Not for years of her hard, monotonous, dull, disappointed life had the blood so tingled in her veins! The unfortunate target of her contempt guessed in the barbed arrows that winged those furious words some personal grudge, some world of hate, long nurtured, now let loose, against her kind. No impersonal ingenuity could have thus invented the harshest buffet, the most stinging epithet. She could not accompany her apostrophe with gesture, for her arms and hands were crippled from rheumatism, and even her limbs were, to her terror, cramping. This bodily impotence seemed but to add to the eloquence of her speech.

She was a handsome woman, or, rather, had possessed a certain beauty of feature and majesty of carriage. Her lineage, on her father's side, was patrician. A younger son of the Count de Grandal, he had married beneath him, for love, the daughter of a Lyons tradesman, who added to her other handicaps

that of Protestantism. Her husband embraced her faith. When their only daughter, Beatrice, grew to womanhood the culprits essayed to find forgiveness, hoping recognition for the child. But the *château* never forgave the shop. Madame de Grandal was forced to content herself with assuming toward this scion of aristocracy she had borne and nurtured an attitude of awed respect. Beatrice accepted this as her due, and reigned right royally a superior creature not only in her mother's house, but later in her husband's. Notwithstanding hopes of greatness—those futile hopes nourished by the romantic school of literature which she delighted in—the Prince Charming never arrived. Beatrice was forced to marry in her mother's class.

It may be said that New England Puritanism is a pale affair—now that the witches are all burned up—compared with the zeal of the provincial Protestants of France. Secretly persecuted by the established church, the derision in which they are held by the Catholics finds its special outlet in social ostracism. It has sunk a venomous animosity in the breasts of the reformers.

Every Sunday Madame Fisher plodded into the town, or, when too ill, was dragged thither by her long-suffering lord in an old chair constructed by him and raised on wheels for this pilgrimage. They repaired to the *Temple*. The *troupeau* consisted of two or three old maids, one little white dog, a doctor's wife or two, and a few dissenting English families that came in the hope of improving their French. This dispirited company listened listlessly to the dull lucubrations of the ill-paid little *pasteur*. Madame Fisher always returned to the *châlet* full of ire when she met the hundreds of worshipers coming out of the new cathedral and casting disdainful glances at the meager congregation of the simpler creed.

Madame Fisher's brief beauty was early lost in the struggles of a peculiarly unsuccessful existence. Ruined in his trade by the Franco-German War, cheated later by a dishonest

friend out of half his saved earnings, his wife's health broken by repeated blows, Monsieur Fisher, alarmed and poverty-stricken, took the *châlet* as a last resource, and endeavored to find lodgers. At this moment he owed a half year's rent. The inhabitant of the *château*, avaricious and uncompromising, was daily threatening him with sheriff and with confiscation. He and his wife clung to the few relics of their happier days, and were engaged in a last heart-breaking effort to save at least their furniture from the grim hand of law. The season was poor, few lodgers presented themselves, which was, perhaps, one reason why they had not carefully enough examined those who did. Madame Fisher desired that her house should shelter only the best people.

Madame Brun's appearance and the propriety of her conduct might have caused her to pass unobserved, had it not been for Monsieur Brun's decided taste for company. They were imprudent enough to give a dinner party whose hilarity sealed their fate. They set their table under the trees, a good deal of wine was consumed, and under its genial inspiration, words and even songs floated to the ears of the other lodgers. The American lady beat a rapid retreat to her own apartment, and even the amiable abbé, who was taking a holiday from the cure of souls, and looked upon the peccadilloes of the adjacent watering place with philanthropic good nature, frowned.

Monsieur Brun, having taken a mid-night train, in the nocturnal conclave between Monsieur Fisher, madame and Marie, it had been decided to put off the *coup* until the morning.

Monsieur Fisher supported his wife's decision with a vigor in which astute observation might have seen a salve to some old sore. He even humored her so far as to call Madame Brun a "creature," adding that for his part he thought Monsieur Brun's taste poor. This last assertion was received with reserved approval. It secretly flattered that hidden vanity which lies in every woman who has once been charming,

and yet there was in it a levity she resented. Was it possible that her husband considered himself a connoisseur? The mere thought froze her into chill silence, and monsieur saw that he had blundered. He was convinced that upon certain topics his wife was crazy, and he touched upon them always with a prudence bordering on cowardice, for he feared her. He had suffered at her hands for years a torture that was only explained by the pusillanimity of a nature at once tender, delicate, melancholy and hopeless.

The most honorable form of cowardice is doubtless that which refuses to give pain to others; it remains, nevertheless, cowardice. It is the most incurable. It cripples endeavor, and never belongs to conquerors. He was an old man now, nearing seventy, round-backed, with short, shambling legs and long, bony arms. His was the deep dejection of the defeated. Once the master of a flourishing fabric, when wealth seemed probable and ease was already obtained, he had hoped for the leisure to develop his pronounced intellectual gifts. Now he had sunk to the mean drudgery of household work. A German-Swiss, excellently educated at an admirable university, passionately fond of books, he was far above his colleagues of trade in mental equipment. In his dreamy boyhood he had planned a future in which there would be ample time to read and think, and even write, for he was secretly a poet. Upstairs, in an old desk, lay hidden some of his lyrics and sonnets. His wife was proud of his literary attainments and never belittled them to others. She even read aloud his verses to such friends as would listen. She did not desire to degrade herself, and in his talent she saw some excuse for her *mésalliance*. Now he was but the pack horse of her tyrannies. He at once feared and worshiped her with awe-inspired sentiment for her superiority of birth and an enormous admiration of her superhuman virtue. Naturally violent of temper, he curbed his spirit so that no word or even look should ever wound her sensibilities. Such storms as once had swept between

them were of the past, encysted in those early years when her attacks did not leave him, as they did now, almost calm.

In the bottom of her heart she respected and perhaps loved him, but the humiliations her pride had suffered found a palliative in the continued attitude of queen to serf. Perhaps he knew that without this she must wilt and die, and so lent himself patiently to the sarcasms and reproaches of her discontent.

After her skirmish with her lodger, she limped to her own bedroom, went in and closed the door.

This dismissal meant ruin. She and her husband both knew it well. Their landlord, always eager for his rent, was to come that afternoon for the quarterly payment, and there was no money in the house with which to meet it. The journalist had taken several rooms, paid well and promised a long stay. Now, no doubt, the apartment would remain vacant the rest of the season. The eager pleasure felt in lashing with her spotlessness another's vileness fell. She was mentally distressed and physically prostrated.

She sat down near the window which she in vain tried to raise with her bent, swollen fingers. She felt as if she were stifling, as if her heart were breaking. What to do?

She could hear her husband raking the leaves on the gravel below her, and peered out at him with a look half angry, half pitiful. "To think," she muttered to herself, "that persons of our gifts are reduced to this, and such creatures as that eat every day and laugh at us."

Her whole life swept before her, with its panorama of high demand and mean attainment. Married late for a French girl—at twenty-eight—and this because an alliance with the aristocracy was found impracticable, she had clung with vim and determination to a curious whim. She demanded that her lord's moral escutcheon at least should be immaculate. She told her mother that she would only marry a man whose record was one of absolute purity. This was a

decision as hard for her parent to meet as to combat. The girl was pious. Her mother began the quest. The town was not full of Galahads. Jean was discovered. No whispered innuendo sullied the reputation of this serious young man who was brought to pay his courtship in grave solemnity. No inquiries which Madame de Grandal made herself could throw light on any boyish escapade, concealed intrigue or clandestine gallantry. They were duly married, and went out into the rosy nimbus of the girl's illusion.

Six months later she discovered that the owner of the great shop of *Bonneterie*, which took most of their wares, a handsome widow of forty, had been her husband's mistress.

Happiness was forever killed. A wedge of hate and of jealousy pierced her heart. The man in vain explained that for two years before he met her the brief *liaison* was over, swearing it was his only swerving from the path of rectitude of a lonely youth. She never forgave.

They found another market for their wares with great pecuniary embarrassment. Her antagonisms were reckless; let it be said to her credit, not intriguing. If she openly branded her rival as a trumpet and a harlot, she at least used no secret weapons. Like all storms, it spent itself. But the fact of the deception—so-called—remained the whip with which she lashed those patient shoulders into their droop of compunction and abasement.

There was another weapon she could wield in moments of ill-humor. Jean's only sister had "gone wrong." She left, in girlhood, an aunt's house in Geneva with evil companions. There was a report that she was in America. Years passed, and she was not heard of. The agony of the blow he kept to himself. It was only under peculiar exasperation that even Beatrice dared throw this disgrace in his face. In fact, she had ceased to do so. She guessed that here was a wound that could not be safely probed. After the first onslaught, when she screamed to him, "All your family are alike polluted," a fire awoke in

his eyes which alarmed her. "Silence!" he had said to her in a tone she did not recognize. For once the quivering flesh resented the slash of the knife. Beatrice, being clever, hazarded no further vivisection. Her sense of being on a pedestal remained. It became a satisfaction which she unconsciously cherished. The slightest descent on her part would have left her a warrior without arms. She did not fully fathom how dear to her were her egoistic grievances, how empty her life would become without them.

Madame Fisher's was the dramatic character which delights in big phrases and big gestures. It must have an audience, some one to impress. Now, as I have said, she sat huddled in her chair with all these lurid recollections burning within her, while outside the tired old man raked the leaves. His relatives, and hers, who hated her, said she had ruined his life with her wild ventures and extravagant expenditure. She believed, on the contrary, that had she married a worldlier man she would have risen to heights they could not even guess. She may have been right. Some persons always manage to be on the wrong side of the street. Jean was one of them. Inheriting from her father a love of luxury and the large-handed munificence of his race, the cramped makeshifts of her poverty fretted and galled her. For these instincts she was not responsible, and she was plucky and proud, and kept a cheerful face to strangers, cheered Jean when he fell by the way, and picked him up again. But, oh, how she loathed it all! The showing of her rooms, the exhibition of her forlornness, the flatteries to the *pensionnaires*, whose intrusion into her home she resented, and whose comments and complaints filled her with anger and with shame.

The kitchen garden looked toward the town, and here at its door the postman at noon found the maid, Marie, shelling her peas for dinner. He handed her a fat foreign letter. The girl took it, hastily wiped her hands and tripped upstairs.

III.

Madame Brun was packing her boxes, and, as she was out of health, the exertion wearied her. Her lips were dry, her hands hot. The half-dried tears left red blotches on her high cheek bones. To dress herself alone and pack all these things, and strap them, and perhaps walk in the heat to the town, for Marie still continued to refuse to serve her, was hard indeed. To hunt up a *camion* for her luggage all by herself, make arrangements for new lodgings, no longer under leafy boughs, but in the hot and crowded town, filled her with gloom. Never in her whole life had she tasted such happiness as here. Gustave was good-natured and loving. He not only imposed her upon others as his wife, he treated her as one. Timid and gentle, the brutality of her lover's selfishness, joined to his occasional affectionate impulses of kindness, held her in that expectancy, that mute submission which dominant natures impel. Now the thought of facing his possible displeasure, with the complications which his hasty temper was sure to breed, gave her a sense of discouragement and lassitude. She was foolishly determined, however, that the other lodgers should not know of her discomfiture. She decided that she would at least tell them her own tale in her own way, before her terrible landlady got their ears. She moved hither and thither about her room, powdering her cheeks and nose, reddening her lips, waving her hair. She put on a smart white sailor hat and her prettiest *percale* frock, and then came boldly forth and joined the American lady, who was sitting on the terrace.

This lady had once or twice spoken to her politely; she felt the concession rehabilitating. She was now sitting on the terrace leaning her head against a tree-trunk, and she was reading Mrs. Sherwood's "A Transplanted Rose." She looked like one herself, in a fluffy *peignoir*, with a great pink chiffon hat tipped over her little straight nose. She was so absorbed in the tale that she

did not hear the approaching footsteps, but, by and by, she looked up and thought, "Here comes that odd woman. She must be an actress. She looks rather sweet and good. It seems to me that the only excuse for a man in marrying an actress is that she should be wicked; that, at least, is interesting. I cannot fancy this girl swelling the crop of crime at the casino."

The intruder stopped short, finding no word. Hers was that feebleness of character to which respites and postponements are precious. The American's survey seemed an invitation. She moved closer to her, and began to speak; her tone a plaintive murmur.

"Since my husband left I have decided to give him a surprise. We do not like the *cuisine* here. It is not what we are accustomed to. At our house in Lyons we have the best of everything. Madame Fisher is *une bête*. I am leaving. Don't you find her disagreeable and the table odious?"

The American lady, who fared sumptuously every day in New York, at Newport and her Hudson River home, replied, "I find it excellent; the milk and eggs so fresh and wholesome," but Madame Brun, brought up on tough *bouillie* and sour wine in the back room of her mother's millinery establishment, went on, "The service, too, is so bad; Marie is *une sottie*."

"But I don't mind roughing it in the least these twenty days, and I delight in having my meals served under these beautiful trees," said the American, with high-bred simplicity.

"My husband is a very generous man. If a woman hadn't a chemise to her back when he found her, he would give her one."

This sounded equivocal. Involuntarily the American lady drew away with repugnance. "She must be wicked, after all," she thought.

Madame Brun realized her mistake, and that legalized spouses did not talk thus. She made hurried adieus, with a poor attempt at sauciness which hid a heavy heart.

The American lady, who, having dis-

covered a freckle on her shapely nose and two on her left temple, was doing the face douches, resumed her novel with a shrug of relief. She was really bored at the *châlet* and sighing for Newport amusements. She compared its stately entertainments with the dull teas at Lady Huffer's, the dreary afternoons at Mademoiselle de la Tourette's, the stuffy Tuesdays in Madame Gaudin's stuffy *salons*. Why ask rural pleasures of the splendid city by the sea, whose inhabitants flee for repose to wider estates? She decided that this was a lost year. She got up and paced up and down the road which hung over the grassy slope, wishing some nice Americans would arrive. She felt lonely and a little homesick.

IV.

Madame Fisher took a moment to fumble for the eyeglass which swung from her neck on a steel chain.

The letter Marie handed her was directed to her husband, but she opened it without scruple. She thought a wife had the right to an early inspection of her lord's private correspondence.

With some surprise, she read in a corner of the envelope the printed address of Firth & Lothrop, attorneys-at-law, with a street and number in Washington.

In her childhood, Beatrice de Grandal had learned English, in those years when her mother still relied on her power to placate the hostility of her husband's people and felt that the girl must be accomplished. Great were the sacrifices made to ornament Beatrice's mind as well as her person. The girl profited by the effort. She was, in a certain sense, an accomplished woman, and there was still in her whole aspect the poise of culture.

Dismissing Marie hastily, in a few moments her trembling fingers betrayed the deep interest of what she read. The letter, however concise, was clear. Its statements were minute. A woman calling herself Mrs. Gabrielle Hubert had died in Washington. She ran, in partnership with a Madame Charles, a

house of ill-repute. In this house nearly all of her capital was invested. There were a few government bonds. All of her property she bequeathed to her only brother, Jean François Pierre Fisher. Though lately of Lyons, at the moment of her death she knew the man to be living near St. Anatole-les-Bains. It seemed she had never lost sight of him.

The house paid well. Madame Charles was desirous of keeping it up, and proposed, if the heir was willing, to serve him half the income which she drew from its inmates and frequenters without further parley. In no other way could its invested value be made to yield one-tenth of the profit. If thrown upon the market, it might not find a purchaser for years. The furniture belonged to Madame Charles. Litigations might ensue. All, at any rate, would be hung up for many months. If Monsieur Fisher consented, a remittance would be made which seemed to Madame Fisher's vision, when hastily increased to francs—she knew the dollars stretched capability—immense indeed! She lay back in her chair, still shaking as if with palsy. Two thin spots stained her thin cheek bones.

Here was salvation! Impotent indignation is one of life's acutest tortures. It had been hers. That very day, with these assurances, their landlord could be crushed by a bold payment. His last visit, full of menace, she had been forced to meet with wheedling promises when she had longed to strike him. She pictured to herself how she would be trundled into town to the banker's, and pledge securities which would persuade him to advance their rent. A sum which yesterday seemed overwhelming, to-day was paltry.

And just then she heard her husband at the threshold. She thrust the letter into her breast. He came in and took off his soiled old coat and threw it across the bed. He mechanically began to brush his hair before the glass of her toilet table, gazing into its depths with a sort of weary wonder. Her agitation was such that she could find no word.

"*Ma chérie*," he said, after a moment, "Beauvard comes to-day. What are we to say to him?"

"There is Aunt Josephine's two hundred francs," she said. Her voice sounded far away to her, like a voice in dreams.

"That is pledged to Duval," he said, sternly, "and you know it. If I hadn't signed a paper that he would touch it before Thursday, our *pensionnaires* would have starved for meat and bread. You consented."

This two hundred francs a year was a legacy to Beatrice from her mother's sister, and it was always left as the last anchor to the drifting ship.

She knew her husband's absolute integrity; that it was bitter pain to him that this petty revenue should ever be used except for her personal benefit, and the terrible difficulties which impelled him to ask it of her for household expense.

"I shall try to pay you back next month," he said, aiming to speak cheerfully—his settled gloom was one of the faults with which she reproached him, the not being amiable in her company and that of others—"I have half a hope of a pupil for German."

She pressed the letter against her bosom, but she did not tell him—not yet. He shuffled about the room a few moments longer, and then went out and down the stairs again. Once alone she found a card and pencil and wrote a few words. She then called Marie, who was going to the spring for water, as far as the *château*, and told her to leave this note there for Monsieur Beauvard. In it she begged him to defer his call until the following day, when she would be ready with the rent. Then she went down to her kitchen and herself superintended the making of a *soufflé* for breakfast that the American lady liked and the abbé had commended.

At the dead of night Madame Fisher rose from her bed, which was close to her husband's, and groped down—her lamp in hand—to the little *salon* where was her desk.

And here she once again perused the

letter which seared her soul. There was no mistake possible. Lionel Firth had dictated to his cleverest stenographer. There was a keen explicitness in which this woman, who was intelligent, seemed to guess a note of cynic pleasure. Spades were called spades indeed, yet she played with them.

She sat down and wrote a letter in her best English; a letter full of questions. What did the rents amount to? How many inmates did the house hold? Was the house itself splendid or modest? She found this last word too satirical, and erased it for another. What might it bring, if sold? Was the house under police *surveillance*? She asked these details with that insistent curiosity of the honest woman. Her empty hands hovered over these ill-gotten gains. She toyed with the letter some minutes, hesitating. Finally, while her confusion hung its flush upon her high, broad forehead, she hurriedly stated that perhaps, nay, probably, for a year—eighteen months, even—everything had better go on as it was. Madame Charles must be appeased. She went on to tell these men where the money should be sent—but here she gasped and laid aside her pen as if a scorpion had bitten her hand. A sudden weariness possessed her. She felt she could not write another word. She pushed the attorney's papers and her own screed into the depths of a drawer and crept up again to lie down beside her sleeping husband. She did not take the trouble to lock the desk. She had no habit of concealment. She and her husband had no secrets from each other. Her advent disturbed him.

"What is it?" he said, starting up with that apprehension of evil which was always upon him. He sat bolt upright, his gray hair bristling on his head. "Are you ill? I'll get your medicine." He was her faithful nurse.

"No, I'm not ill. I went to see," said she, "if Marie had shut the dining-room shutters; she sometimes forgets, and the silver is in the *buffet*."

"We shall have to sell the medallions," said her husband, picking up their

last discussion before the good-night kiss; "we'll have to sell the medallions. Beauvard comes to-morrow."

The medallions were a prized heirloom; two old engravings in gilded oval frames, a present from her father to her mother when they were *fiancés*. They had ornamented his bachelor rooms in his father's great house.

"The Marquis de la Tourette offered me a hundred francs apiece," said she, getting into bed; "but I dare say he'll lie out of it. He's a Catholic." Her detestation of the Romanists never slept.

"That is giving them away. You should have asked more," murmured her husband.

"Avarice doesn't lead to fortune, and sitting on our possessions isn't going to pay our debts"—she accused her husband of parsimony—"but don't worry, *mon ami*, I wrote Beauvard to wait another day. Who knows what may happen?"

"Nothing ever happens to us but disaster," said her husband; whose pessimism she always combated. It is a true proverb that Fortune knocks at the smiling gate.

At dawn the old man went down to the *salon* as usual to open and air it and scrape and carry off the ashes of the wood fire, which, upon chilly nights, he lighted for his lodgers. He idly groped about the desk looking for a newspaper left there the night before, with which he might prepare the grate for the evening's blaze. He then remembered that he must write to a tradesman in Lyons, who was dunning him with his bill. Debt was horrible to this honest man and, as he peered about with his nearsighted eyes for the writing-paper box, his soul was heavy within him. The box was not in its accustomed place. He pulled at a drawer. It stuck. He jerked it. There might be a sheet of paper and an envelope here. It gave way and he drew out his wife's letter and Lionel's.

He laid them out before him, and he read them through. He, too, was something of a linguist, and he read English, though he could not pronounce it.

He had finished them both for the

second time when his wife appeared at the door.

She wore a black-and-white calico wrapper, with her black lace cap tied about her ears. Her feet were encased in large black felt slippers. She walked noiselessly, like one that steps on cotton.

He turned slowly from where he sat at the desk, and looked at her.

The day was windy. A shutter swung backward and forward; creaking on the gale. A cold gray light shone mercilessly into the little room, exposing its mean and shabby interior; its often-washed crochet tidies; its one cracked vase with its fading flowers; the worn velvet sofa with its worsted-work cushion—all looked peculiarly dingy and dusty. The medallions swung upon the wall, a last vestige of lost elegance. Their frames gleamed in the dark sunrise.

His glance transfixed her. Her heart, which was a valiant one, stood still.

There was a pause, during which he fixed her with a scrutiny which made her squirm on the spot of carpet to which she seemed rooted. At last he spoke slowly, in a voice in which there lay that threat of violence which years ago had been broken to submission.

"Is it my wife," he asked, "who wrote this infamous letter?" He touched it with his finger.

Her old spirit came to her rescue in an angry rejoinder, "What right have you to meddle with my private papers?" She was no coward.

"It seems to me," he said, very quietly, "as this announcement is directed to me, that I might ask you a similar question."

She remained dumb.

A *chouette* swept its wing, screaming, across the pane; the loosened shutter banged against the window-sill; a dog barked on the road to St. Anatole, and these two sat and stood immovable, like statues on a grave.

At last, "What do you intend to do?" she asked him, huskily.

"This," and he tore her closely written manuscript into shreds and threw

it into the basket at his feet. "I am your husband, not your servant. You have forgotten it too long."

She sprang forward to stay his arm, with a cry which now changed into hysterical weeping. "I didn't mean to send it, Jean," she moaned; "I meant, of course, to consult with you; you knew our plight." But the scorn of his regard turned her to stone. "Why do you look at me so, Jean? What have I done? Even if I faltered a moment, was it unpardonable?"

He continued to gaze at her, but the taunt which might well have arisen to his lips died out unspoken, for poor old Jean's was a fine nature. She ceased sobbing suddenly, like a child whom terror sobers to silence. He then got up and walked up and down the room, up and down. "You ask me what I shall do. I hardly know. So help me God, no dollar of that money shall ever be for me! Of course, I shall at once, at any sacrifice, put all this property of my unfortunate sister's upon the market. If you like then to take of what it brings—it can be yours; you shall decide. You need physicians, nurses, attendants. Since my stupidity, or my misfortune, has made of us objects of public charity, can this money be better spent than in placing you in a sanitarium where you can have treatment for your maladies? This you can determine. After liquidating and selling all, I will go to Geneva, and seek employment. I have some friends there, perhaps influence. When I can offer you a decent home, through my own exertions, then you will come."

As she remained speechless, he continued: "Poor Gabrielle! God have mercy on her soul! She had no bringing up. We lost our parents in our infancy. She was unhappy with my aunt"—he shuddered—"and I too young to guide and save her. She was once, like you, a pretty, happy child. Poor Gabrielle!"

She was only a huddled, humbled old woman now, incoherently saying that whatever he saw fit should be done. "You will, at least, be freed of me," she said.

"Believe me, it is an unwished-for freedom. Am I not to taste of Dante's pain?" and he quoted:

"Learn how salt his food who fares
Upon another's bread, how steep his path
Who treads up and down another's stairs."

"My relatives must take me." The sincerity of his words seemed to clothe him with majesty.

Then, as she gazed at him wonderingly, she saw him pull up his coat sleeves and examine carefully both of his wrists. Had this shock bereft him of his reason? Would maniacal laughter be the next development? "What are you staring at your wrists for, Jean?" she asked, in a frightened whisper.

"I was looking for my manacles," he said, sternly, "they seem to have fallen."

Always impressed by the dramatic, the toss-back of his head, as of a slave who has found liberty, shriveled her passionate love of power to atoms. Cowed and crushed, she left him stand-

ing on his hearthrug, not looking back and without protest.

Lyonel Firth hardly found alimant for sarcasm in Monsieur Fisher's short answer to his letter, only requesting that immediate steps be taken to close up Mrs. Hubert's late habitation. The letter was in French. "I half thought," he said, laughing, to his partner, "they would want us to keep the place up, and settle everything with as little noise and as much money as possible. French *bourgeois* are apt to have a thrifty eye, but this fellow seems to want a speedy settlement at any cost."

"It's a dirty piece of business," said the partner, "and I'm glad we can push it through at once. These legatees seem to be decent sort of people."

So Beatrice's moment of dishonor was never known; the flame which burned her letter kept well its secrets, but in its purifying blaze was consumed that Pharisaic arrogance which had made her husband's life a martyrdom.



THE ARTIST MAID

HER figure is a true Chavannes—
She had a Whistler mother;
One of her hands is Louis Quinze,
And Louis Seize the other.

Her smiles are Lippi's in repose,
Her ringlets Botticelli's;
Some of her clothes are Angelico's,
And some are her sister Nellie's.

RODERICK GILL.

THE MAN IN LOVE

II.—THE ART OF COURTSHIP

By Dorothy Dix

Author of "Fables of the Elite"

SOONER or later, there comes to every man a time when all the interests in life resolve themselves into the one inexpressible *She*. This may be the result of an unexpected impulse or a settled conviction—Amaryllis may have flashed by and set all his pulses thrilling, or Hannah Jane, with whom he has been keeping company for the past seven years, may have suddenly waked him up—but, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, he has changed from the calm and dispassionate contemplator of feminine charms into the eager lover, and the most important thing in the world has become the wooing and winning of some particular Golden Girl.

For the time being, his horizon is bounded by a petticoat. Old amusements lose their charm. Cherished friends become bores. Business sinks into a secondary place, and the fate of the universe trembles in the balance while she says "Yes" or "No."

The man is in love, and the case is serious. He may be cocksure about everything else, but he is so abjectly humble he is ready to take advice from his office-boy on the way to conduct a courtship. He may have been glib at talking sentiment to other women. He becomes tongue-tied in the presence of the adored one. He may have even been an expert at flirtation, but he is a bungling novice when it comes to winning the woman he really desires for a wife. The situation is desperate, and he has lost his nerve. It is one thing to play a game for counters and another to have real money on the table.

At no other period of his life is a man of more genuine, heartfelt interest to his neighbors than when he is conducting a courtship. Under the stress of the tender passion he does things of which he had previously believed himself incapable, and which he afterward denies, but for the time being he is a changed creature, well worthy of study. Old widowers, stiff and rheumatic, forget their bones and frisk about like schoolboys; the sedate become frivolous, the prosaic drop into poetry, the miserly grow generous, and the slouchy sally radiantly forth the glass of fashion and the mould of form. Strange to say, however, men seldom enjoy this little transformation scene, this little oasis of romance set amid the aridity of the desert of existence. To a woman, it is cakes and ale, but a man always feels that he is making a spectacle of himself, and the reason that most engagements are so short is because the suitor wants to get over the agony of love-making and back to the practical affairs of everyday life.

Abroad, where marriages are made by the parents or a go-between, the matter is arranged with much more comfort, if less romance, but in this country, where every man is his own wooer, the situation is full of acute misery to the suitor. He is thrown out of his element, and out of the beaten track where he knows the ropes. He cannot contract for so many tons of undying devotion to be delivered on demand at the market price; he cannot telegraph or telephone for a consignment of affection, or get an option through his broker on his lady-

love's heart, and, when an American man reaches that point, he feels that he has reached the end of his tether.

Inasmuch as men do not enjoy courtship, the convention that gives them a complete monopoly of all the active love-making seems a needless waste of opportunities. Women could do it much better, and probably no woman ever watched a man conduct a courtship, even when she was the object of it, without wanting to give him a helping hand and show him how to do the trick. He is timid where he should be bold; he beseeches where he should command; he spends money on her when she wants sentiment; he is idiot enough to ask for a kiss, and besotted enough to believe her when she refuses it. In a word, he misses all the fine points that turn a business contract into a poem. The keys of her heart are all hanging on the outside of the door, and it fills her with helpless rage when she has to watch him trying to break into it with a dark-lantern and a jimmy, instead of working the right combination to the lock.

When he bumbles a situation, she feels like a professional sitting behind an amateur's chair, seeing him throw away a game that is in his hands. She has to bite her lips to keep from prompting him about how to play his cards, and, when he loses the points he ought to have made, she sheds tears over his stupidity.

Now, in reality, although men claim that women are uncertain, coy, and hard to please, and profess to find something difficult in winning their hearts, the art of courtship is very simple, and consists in merely a choice of methods. There are two ways to do it. One is by storm and the other by siege, and both ways work.

The woman's choice is by storm. There is something ineradicably primeval and barbaric in a woman's nature that always responds to brute force. A woman's ideal of love is quantity, not quality. She wants to be loved savagely by some man, who is ready to murder her if she doesn't marry him. The heroes in women's novels are seldom gentlemen. They are dark-browed villains, capable of committing any

crime to get the woman they love, and, in spite of six thousand years of civilization, that is still the feminine ideal. In her secret soul it is a grief to woman that the actual physical kidnapping of brides is no longer good form in society. She would dote on being captured by a pirate in an automobile and whirled away to a honeymoon that was full of blood-curdling romance.

No man ever makes a greater mistake than when he woos a woman humbly. When God made man of taller stature than woman, he intended that she should look up and not down, and the man who burns incense at a woman's feet generally gets kicked for his pains. Be a woman's vassal, fetch and carry for her, take the favors she throws you as gratefully as a dog does a bone, and she will snub you every time; but make her believe you stand upon a pedestal, and she will break her neck climbing up to share your halo.

Women like men that dominate them, and the man that does not ask their love, but takes it. The suitor that tells a woman he is going to marry her whether she wants him or not ends by doing it. The stormy and passionate wooing has gone to her head and captured her fancy, and when you capture a woman's fancy you have the keys to the citadel. The fortress has surrendered.

The courtship by siege is less spectacular and has fewer fireworks about it, but it is equally successful, for all things come to the patient waiter. If a man feels that he is not a dark-browed villain who can abduct a lady, or terrorize her into joyfully consenting to be his, the best plan is to sit down on her doorstep and camp there until she marries him to get rid of him.

Many points are in his favor. For one thing, by being continually on the spot he gradually and imperceptibly establishes a quarantine around his ladylove that keeps all other suitors at a distance. She isn't married to him, but she had better be, as far as keeping other men away is concerned. Then, by degrees, he forges a chain upon her gratitude and liking. She reflects that

he has been faithful when other men fell away. He always considers her pleasures. He knows her tastes. Propinquity is on his side, and the habit of affection. She grows dependent upon him, and when some fine day, he announces discreetly that he is going off to fight Indians, or dig clams, or do something desperate, she realizes that his absence would leave a void that nothing could fill, and she weeps upon his collar and begs him not to leave her.

The importance of having good staying powers in a courtship cannot be insisted upon too strongly, if one wants to possess the particular peach that hangs highest on his tree. Only over-ripe fruit drops at the first shake. A man that takes a woman's first "No" as final is a faint-hearted craven that would fire one gun and then run up the white flag. Women's likes and dislikes change continually. The kind of a man a woman adored yesterday fills her with disgust to-day, and many a girl, if given time, is glad to embrace the opportunity she refused with scorn. There are people that are an acquired taste, like olives, but they are an insatiable passion when once you learn to like them, and the man that keeps himself continually on the *menu* is almost certain to gain victory.

Every debutante's ideal of manly perfection is a curly-haired creature that can two-step uncounted miles, without stopping to take breath. Six months later she revises her opinion of her fellow-man, and she keeps changing it until she is thirty. At any time during that period a man may wake up to find out he is IT with her, and there's no use in a suitor's despairing as long as the woman he loves is on his side of the altar. There's always a fighting chance for a prize until another gets it.

A strategic move that usually meets with much success is a star play to a woman's sympathy. More women marry men because they are sorry for them than for any other motive. This move must be made discreetly, though. The man that whines is lost. He doesn't arouse pity. He rouses disgust. But

the man that can make himself picturesquely wretched before a woman that has refused him, that smiles sadly above a broken heart and hopes the thought of his blighted life will never shadow her happiness, has a trump card, while the one that can make her believe that he is trembling on the verge of suicide, has the game won. Women know, in their rational moments, that men do not die of love, or even lose their appetites over it; but when a man tells a woman that he is suffering—perhaps pining away—for love of her, the appeal to her vanity and her pity is so subtle that she goes down before it.

Many men are strong advocates of the bribery theory in courtship, and seem to think that the road to a woman's heart is paved with gifts. This is a mistake. Women like generous men and men that, when they do spend, are not niggardly about trifles, but no woman's love was ever bought. It is not the youths that waste their substance on flowers and bonbons that are the most popular with the fair sex. Every girl has what she calls her "candy beau," but she seldom marries him. The best way to touch a girl's heart is not by upsetting her digestion.

An important point, just here, that men frequently overlook, is that he that would curry favors with gifts must give with tact. The personal element with woman is always the strongest, and she would rather have a five-cent bunch of field-flowers that represented some taste or fancy of hers, or that recalled some anniversary to her, than a fifty-dollar bunch of American Beauties, that were bought hit-or-miss, and meant nothing but the man's stupidity and the florist's art. But the woman that demands gifts, or is overly pleased with them, is not in love. She is simply greedy.

"Be bold, be bold, be not too bold." No more delicate point can be raised in a courtship than this, or one that takes a nicer discrimination to settle. Women hate a bashful and timid man, and resent having to lead one on to the proposing point, and yet they loathe the one who assumes that he is a fascinator

that no one could resist, and that he has only to throw the handkerchief to have every female in sight scramble for it. Many a man has lost the wife he wanted because he didn't have the courage to ask her, and many another has been refused because he looked so aggravatingly sure, that the girl couldn't resist the opportunity of pricking the bubble of his vanity by saying "No." The ideal lover takes all that a bold heart can wish and a strong hand grasp, but he takes nothing for granted. He doesn't wait to take out an accident insurance policy before he climbs up the balcony railing to Juliet, but he never intimates that he thought she was about to take a header into the garden after him.

Three dangers there are in courtship. One is: That a man will say too much; another, that he will say too little. Too glib love-making argues too much experience; too little starves the heart of the woman who is hungering and thirsting for romance. During courtship is a time when a man should let go his hold on veracity, and his recording angel should knock off business, for it is every woman's right, once in her lifetime, to be told that she is perfectly beautiful, brilliantly witty, irresistibly fascinating, and a complete, unabridged compendium of every feminine charm. Afterward, there is a whole cycle of married life, in which the man can explain to his wife that when he made these remarks he was laboring under excitement, and didn't mean all he said; but the woman that has once feasted her fill upon romance can starve through years and still consider herself blessed.

But whatever you say to a woman—and no expression can be too strong for the occasion—never write it. Whisper your love; telephone it; shout it through a megaphone, but do not put it on paper. Never forget that the airy nothing that sounds so enchanting and poetic, as you murmur it in a shell-like ear under the palms, looks like driveling idiocy when you see it in cold print. Cupid plays sad tricks in these days. Sometimes a courtship ends in a wedding, and sometimes in a breach-of-

promise suit, for the forsaken maiden does not now tie up her old love letters with a faded blue ribbon and bedew them with her tears. She sorts out the most impassioned of them and lies forth to a lawyer.

The third danger is jealousy, which is a boomerang that always returns and annihilates the man. If he lets a woman see that she can make him jealous, thereafter he is merely a monkey on a stick that she manipulates for her own gratification and the pleasure of her friends. On the other hand, if he makes her jealous, he is simply furnishing the text for future curtain lectures and unfounded suspicions.

The most vital point of a courtship, however, is the ability to seize the psychological moment when a woman is ready to say "Yes." Men seldom appreciate the importance of this, and do not understand that a wave of loneliness, of homesickness, of weakness, may make a woman suddenly feel that nothing on earth is so desirable as to cling to the big, strong, commonplace fellow she has flouted for years, or that, in a minute, because the band is playing and the moon is shining, she realizes that she is in love with a man she had never thought of tenderly before.

The finest bit of acting in a modern play is in "The Doll's House," where Mrs. Fiske, when her husband's friend begins to make love to her, jumps up and goes over and turns up the lamp. Every woman in the house knows that it is the psychological moment in the twilight when a woman is romantic—when she will always listen to a man make love to her. Then she needs a chaperone and needs her quick. Yet—God help us—there are men that propose to women on a street car, and that wonder when the woman says fiercely, "NO!"

A young woman that had been unsuccessfully wrestling with a career was asked why she did not marry a worthy young man that had been courting her for years.

"Because," replied the girl, "he hasn't sense enough to ask me at the right time. He always comes and proposes

in the morning, or when I have a new frock, or have sold a picture, and feel big and strong enough to fight the world by myself, and I say, 'No'. If he only would ask me when I am tired and discouraged, and merely want to weep on

somebody's shoulder, I would only be too glad to say 'Yes'."

But, after all, there is no infallible guide to courtship. If a woman loves a man, any old way works. If she doesn't—all eloquence is wasted.



THE PROCESSION

THE gray year drifted out,
 As a tired love might go,
 And there was no heart to breathe a song
 Across the leagues of snow;
 Oh, the gray, sad year went out, went out,
 And who was there to know?

The glad new year came in,
 As a white young love might come,
 And through all the world there was the sound
 Of welcoming bell and drum;
 Oh, the glad new year came in, came in,
 And hearts with joy grew dumb.

But the new year shall go out,
 As the old year went its way;
 And the young love must grow very old,
 Yea, old and wan and gray;
 And thus shall it be till time and love
 Die on a Winter's day.

CHARLES HANSON TOWNE.

TO THE HEIGHTS OF FAME

By Ralph Henry Barbour

Author of "The Scrub Quarterback," Etc.

THE proprietor of The Wayside Inn sat behind the little desk by the door and gazed out into the narrow, snow-covered street. He was a man of thirty-five or six years, on whose genial face Care had left its imprint of lines and furrows. Yet those lines seemed to have added attractiveness, emphasizing the resolute but kindly form of mouth and chin, and drawing attention to the deep-set yet frankly pleasant blue eyes. The proprietor was a wholesome-looking man, whom birth, you would have said, had intended for higher things than running a tiny restaurant in a side street of lower New York.

Despite its smallness—partly, perhaps, because of it—The Wayside Inn was eminently attractive, and more than hinted at the personality of the proprietor. Outside, over the narrow entrance, a wooden signboard swung from an old-style wrought-iron crane. The front of the building was stained to the smoky hue of old oak, and the leaded panes of door and windows lent to the place an inviting aspect of comfort and good cheer. Within, all was of the plainest and neatest. The two rows of undraped tables stretched away into the semi-darkness of the long room on either side of an avenue of bright carpet. The ceiling was crossed by dark beams, and the walls were wainscotted to shoulder-height and hung above with pictures, good pictures, framed plainly and inexpensively.

To-day the inn was empty save for the man at the desk. It was Christmas, and the little clock had just struck two. Outside, it was snowing softly, monotonously, and the restaurant was si-

lent and dim, except at the front, where the white light struggled in through the tiny, snow-splotched panes, and where the gentle sighing and rustle of the storm made themselves heard.

The proprietor looked for no patrons to-day, and yet when a figure passed the window and there followed a fumbling at the latch, his face expressed no surprise. The door opened and a man entered. He shook the snow from his coat and placed his umbrella in the stand.

The proprietor slid off the high chair and greeted him.

"How do you do, sir?" he said. "A stormy day."

"Very," replied the other. He looked about him, searching the dim vista of unoccupied tables as though seeking some one, and emitting a sigh when he discovered the room to be empty, save for the presence of the proprietor and himself.

"Will you have dinner?" asked the proprietor. "I regret to say that I cannot offer a great deal, since, it being Christmas, I have allowed all my help to go except the second cook. You see, my patrons are almost all business men, and, so, when the offices and stores are closed, I do not look for custom. However, I can give you a steak, or chops, or a slice of venison. Turkey, I am sorry to say, is not among the possibilities; but perhaps the half of a young chicken would do as well?"

"It doesn't matter," replied the other. He glanced irresolutely toward his umbrella, as though meditating retreat. But the proprietor had drawn back a chair invitingly from the table nearest the window, and, after a moment, the newcomer allowed him to take his shabby

overcoat and sank somewhat dispiritedly into the seat.

"The fact is," he said, "I had an appointment here with a friend. I scarcely expected to find him, and yet—yet I am disappointed. Well, disappointments are not new to me, and one more won't hurt, I dare say." He unfolded his napkin listlessly.

"Perhaps your friend is delayed by the storm," suggested the proprietor. "If you care to wait a while——"

"No, he won't come. I could hardly expect it. He said two o'clock on Christmas Day, 1901. Jim was never late to an appointment in his life. He won't come now, for, if your clock is right, it is already quarter after the hour."

"The clock is right to a minute, sir. But—pardon my curiosity—do I understand that the engagement is of long standing?"

"It was made ten years ago this coming June, sir."

"Ah! then it is just possible that it has escaped your friend's memory. Ten years is a long time in this age. I am sorry you have met with disappointment." The proprietor's regret was so evident and sincere that the stranger warmed to him.

"You're very good," he said, smiling for the first time since he had entered. "And, look here, I've eaten my meals alone for five years and more, and I'm sick to death of the dreariness of it. I've been looking forward to this dinner for months past, hoping and yet not daring to hope that Jim would turn up, and tasting in anticipation the pleasure of once more dining with a human being and a friend. Well, it was not to be, but if you'll order a nice dinner for two—not too expensive, I beg of you—and join me in eating it you'll be doing a real charity and kindness to a fellow-mortal who is quite ready to jump into the river to escape loneliness. What do you say?"

"With all the pleasure in the world," replied the other, heartily. "I have not yet dined, and I shall be almost as glad as you, I dare say, to have a companion. There is, however, one amendment to

your proposition I am forced to insist upon."

"And that?" asked the stranger.

"And that, sir, is that you become my guest, for it is one of my rules that on Christmas Day no money goes in or out of the till. And, so, if you will overlook the fact that I am a stranger to you and accept of my hospitality, you, in turn, will be conferring a kindness, sir."

The other hesitated a moment, glancing the while mistrustfully at the proprietor. Finally, his face cleared and he laughed a trifle harshly.

"Very well. Pardon my hesitation: the fact is, I have had so few offers of kindness made to me within the last ten years that I am like to view any such with suspicion. I accept your hospitality, sir, in the spirit in which it is made." He bowed courteously.

"You are very good," responded the proprietor. "And, now, if you will excuse me for a few moments, I will awaken the cook, who is, I am certain, asleep in the storeroom, and see about our Christmas dinner. I have the morning paper here, if you care to see it."

But the other shook his head. "Thank you, no; I shall be quite comfortable until your return. Pray, don't put yourself out any more than is necessary upon my account."

The proprietor passed down the aisle and through a door at the far end, and the newcomer, left to himself, tilted back his chair and stared thoughtfully out of the window and through the falling flakes at the row of silent, old-fashioned brick houses across the way. He was a man of apparently forty years, and, as in the case of the proprietor, Care had seamed his countenance. But in his case the seams had not bettered it. Instead, his face, good-looking though it was, held an expression of worry and irritation. Life had dealt harshly with him. His attire was neat and clean, and yet careful observation would have discovered that his cuffs were frayed, his coat decidedly glossy under the sleeves and back of the shoulders; that his shoes had seen much wear and were not guiltless of patches. He tugged at an

imitation gold watch chain which hung across his vest and looked down. When only a bunch of keys rewarded his gaze, he shrugged his shoulders.

"I might have kept it," he muttered, "had I foreseen that there was one man in the world fool enough to give away a dinner."

He restored the keys to his pocket, and once more returned to a listless contemplation of the cheerless scene without. A quarter of an hour passed, and then the proprietor returned and laid the table with clean white cloth and gleaming silver and glass, chatting pleasantly as he came and went. Finally, another trip to the kitchen was made, and when he returned he bore a great tray, on which reposed many covered dishes and a white-swathed bottle. He set the viands on the table, placed the glasses and filled them, and then took a chair opposite the stranger.

"I hope you will approve of my selection," he said, smiling across, as he served the clear, steaming soup. "I have omitted fish, but have tried to atone for it by adding a *pâté* of kidneys with mushrooms to the broiled chicken, which I think you will like. It is a creation of my own. This Burgundy is good without being heavy. Your health, sir!"

They drank together, and the stranger laid aside his spoon with a sigh of pleasure. Some of the lines faded from his face and his lips took on a smile.

"God!" he said, softly, "but it is good to eat like a Christian again! Why, sir, for years I have not, I give you my word, eaten a meal with any save strangers. And it's many a year, too, since I've tasted wine with my dinner. Not," he hastened to add, with a queer little tone of pomposity, "not, sir, that I am—ah—destitute. Pray, don't think that. It is merely that I have no friends, and have grown to look upon eating as a duty, something disagreeable, like visiting the dentist, you understand, rather than a pleasure. That is all, sir."

The proprietor of the inn bowed politely. "A great mistake to fall into," he said. "Eating is a duty, to be sure, but it should be a pleasant duty. But I

confess that there was a time when your case was my own. I was pretty well down in the world, and as a last resort applied for a position as waiter at this restaurant. It so happened that the proprietor was in need of a man, and he took me on. I had two years of it, and it was hard work. But it kept me alive. And then it was that eating seemed only the means to an end, and not the pleasure that it really is. Let me help you to a trifle more. No? You're not doing justice to the dinner, sir."

"On the contrary, I am doing very well, and, what is more important, enjoying every mouthful of it. And so you worked up from the position of waiter to that of owner?"

"Yes. It took me six years, but I did it. After I had been here two years I was made head waiter, and four years later I was in position to make the owner an offer for the establishment and good-will, an offer which he was glad to accept, for the place had been rapidly running down. I took hold of it, fixed it up as you see, and now, while my fortune is still to make, I am doing remarkably well. My patrons are mostly men who appreciate good meals and are willing to pay well for them. I have five millionaires among my regular customers, and I may add, incidentally, that they are by far the most modest lunchers. Well"—the speaker paused and smiled retrospectively—"it is not what I looked for. I had other dreams, as you may imagine, ten years ago, but, after all, I might fare far worse, and, at least, I am contented, for it is better to manage a restaurant well than to misdirect the affairs of an empire—or so, sir, it seems to me."

"You are right," answered the other, as he accepted the breast and leg of a plump, well-broiled chicken, "and I wish to heaven I could truthfully say that I have ever in my life done a single thing well."

"Ah! there you exaggerate, I am certain," responded the host, earnestly. "We are liable to fall into the error of thinking that because an occupation does not fill our pockets with gold that we are poor performers. There are those

who toil all their lives and never find wealth, yet live happily, contentedly, certain in the knowledge that they are doing their work well, taking an artist's satisfaction and finding their reward in that knowledge."

"It may be," answered the other, dispiritedly. "I cannot say. I only know that my own life thus far has been one of the most miserable failures imaginable. Like you, sir, I had dreams of great things. I was educated for the law, a graduate of Princeton and of the Yale Law School. It was ten years ago this coming spring that I came to New York, filled to overflowing with the most reckless confidence and the most delicious hopes that God ever put into a man's heart.

"With me came my friend, almost the only friend I have ever had. His name was Stafford, Jim Stafford. We were in the same class, and while I was in the Law School he took up special work in philosophy, for he was fitting himself for an instructorship. The last time we met we sat just here, at this very table it may have been.

"It was on the eve of his departure to a small Western college, where he had found a position. We had been downtown all the afternoon, seeing a few acquaintances and buying things he needed for his journey. Dinner-time found us at the end of this street. We came here and dined, very merrily, very hopefully, over roast beef and mugs of ale. We sat here until late, dreaming aloud of the great things we were to accomplish and toasting the future, that wonderful future. We were fools, but what happy fools! We had a toast, a sort of watchword, and we drank to it many times, and parted with it on our lips: 'To the——'" He stopped and shook his head.

"But, no; it were sacrilege to repeat it now. It belongs to the old days. . . . Well, sir, I have bored you enough. That is all."

"On the contrary, you interest me greatly. The tale is sad and yet it may end happily; who can tell? The play's not over until the curtain's down. And what became of your friend?"

"Jim? I heard from him very regularly for three years; then he dropped out of my life. It was partly my fault. Misfortune after misfortune had befallen me, until I was soured and morose; I was even envious of Jim's good fortune, and I think he read as much between the lines of my letters. In the end our correspondence ceased.

"I moved here and there, ever seeking less expensive lodgings, for luck never once came my way. Five years ago I wrote to Jim at the old address, but the letter came back. He had gone from there. Later, I wrote to our class secretary, but without success. Jim has dropped out of sight, much, I dare say, as I have. Perhaps he is dead; I think he must be, for were he alive he would have kept his appointment here this afternoon. Jim never missed appointments."

"And yet—ten years——"

"I know, but we agreed solemnly to meet here this day, no matter in what part of the world we might find ourselves. No, Jim must be gone."

"And yet, perhaps you may have passed him in the street a dozen times within the last year and not have known him," mused the host. "Ten years of work and vicissitudes alter a man's looks, you know. Do you think, now, you'd recognize your friend if you saw him?"

The other hesitated and looked troubled. "I think so, and yet I own that Jim's features are utterly forgotten to me. Only, if I saw them again memory would cry out on the instant. I'm certain of that."

The other shook his head, smiling.

"Who knows? A beard gone, a whitening of the hair about the temples, a new design in wrinkles, any of these is sufficient to alter a man so that, in ten years, even his mother might hesitate to greet him. I've seen it. But let me help you to some more of the salad. This is Christmas Day, a day of good-will and peace, so let us forget our troubles and worries, even if it be for only a short hour or two. Is it a bargain?"

"Well, you have a way of making

troubles seem trivial," said his guest, smiling, "and so I'll do my best. But I fear the bargain is a bit one-sided. I'll wager you have no worry on earth."

"Wrong," laughed the other. "Yesterday I lost my head waiter. He was too good to remain downtown any longer, and so he graduated, and to-morrow begins his new life in a Fifth Avenue hotel. Well, I wish him luck; but he has left me in a dilemma. Head waiters, like poets, are born and not made."

The other paused, with fork in hand, and stared intently out into the snow-carpeted street. The host watched him closely, a little smile on his lips. Presently the stranger, with a sudden paling of his sallow cheeks, turned his gaze across the table.

"Give me the place," he begged, in a voice that trembled. "For God's sake, sir, give it to me! I'm at the end of my rope. I pawned my watch this morning for two dollars, all they would give me on it, for it is only brass, in order to come here, and, if Jim turned up, pay my part of the score. If he did not come— Well, I refused to think of that. Somehow, wrongly, as it has turned out, I was certain I would find him. And, now— Look here, I've tried the law and I've failed; I've tried writing, and I've starved; I've canvassed, and made a pittance, and three days ago I bought a lot of tin toys with almost all the money I had left, and went into the street in front of one of the big stores to sell them. The first person my eyes fell on was a woman I'd known years ago. I saw the look in her eyes as she recognized me. I turned and fled. I sold the toys to a Jew vendor for half what I gave for them. Yesterday I tried to find work as a porter. To-day— You see, I've tried almost everything, but I've never tried waiting. They say that every man is capable of doing something well if he can find it; perhaps I can wait. I don't ask for much; give me my meals and a dollar or two. I can learn quickly—for God's sake, sir, give me the place!"

"I may explain," answered the proprietor of the inn, with a kindly smile

and a suspicious moistness of his blue eyes, "that I am somewhat of a believer in fate. When you entered an hour ago I said to myself, 'Here is my new head waiter.' You see, sir, I was not mistaken. The place is yours; may it lead to better things."

"You—you mean it?" gasped the other, breathing hard and reaching a shaking hand across the table.

"I mean it." The two clasped hands.

Then the stranger dropped back against his chair and sat with lowered eyes that the other might not see the tears in them.

The host arose, humming a song, and removed the plates from the table, substituting a dish of red grapes and a bowl of walnuts and raisins. He brought cigars from the little case beside the desk, and a tray of matches. All the while he smiled happily. Once, when he could not be seen, he brushed a tear from his cheek. He filled the stranger's glass and his own until the red wine, flooding, stained the white cloth. Standing behind his chair, erect and gravely smiling, he raised his glass in fingers that trembled a little.

"Sir, will you drink a toast with me?" he asked.

The other started abruptly, as from a daze, and following his host's example, took his glass and stood up.

"A toast?" he cried, his voice ringing happily. "A thousand toasts!" His eyes were wet, but the lines of worry were fading out of his face.

The two faced each other across the table. The room was very still. Only the little brushing sound of the snow against the dimming panes was heard. The guest waited for the other to break the silence; and as he waited, somewhere within him memory whispered faintly, indistinctly. The host put forth his hand until the two glasses touched, clinking, over the board.

"TO THE HEIGHTS OF FAME!" he said.

The stranger's glass fell from his stiffening fingers and broke in fragments upon the table.

"Jim!" he gasped.

MEMORIALS

By Richard Burton

BESIDE the shining river's brim,
By vital green of grasses spanned
And circled by the hills that rim
The blue horizon's wonderland,
The ruins of a dwelling rise
Pathetic to the evening skies.

Mounds, where a hearthfire once was bright;
And tumbled rails that girdled in
A garden with its blooms alight
And waving growths, their next of kin;
Above, a well-sweep rising sheer
Out of the wreck of many a year.

An eloquence of what is past
Broods like a ghost around the place;
The dreams that brick and stone outlast
Sit peering in each other's face;
Lo! every cornerstone is rife
With phantoms of forgotten life!

Here love was potent, work and play
Lifted twin voices clear and strong;
There is no other sound to-day
Save music of the river's song:
Across the crumbled years they call,
The well-sweep and the ruined wall.

THE ARTLESS AGE

By Caroline Duer

CHARACTERS

MARIAN *A Young Lady, Aged Eighteen.*
ETHEL *A Young Lady, Aged Nineteen.*

Time: Present. Place: New York.

SCENE—Marian's boudoir. *As the curtain rises, Marian, dressed to go out, is standing near the center-table, putting on her gloves. It is a cheerful, cherry-colored room, prettily furnished. A fire burns gayly in the grate on the right, the sun shines brightly through two windows at the back. A door on the left suddenly opens and Ethel, also in street costume, dashes in.*

MARIAN—Ethel!

(They clasp hands warmly, look each other up and down, and suddenly notice that their hats are trimmed alike.)

BOTH *(together, with eyes fixed on each other's heads)*—My dear! What a pretty hat!

ETHEL *(discontentedly)*—So glad you like it, dear. It cost thirty-five dollars.

MARIAN *(still more discontentedly)*—I think that's a little extravagant. I only paid thirty for mine. Where did you get it?

ETHEL—Oh, at Lowenstyle's. I bought the first one—the French model. They copy them more cheaply, I know. Were you just going out?

MARIAN—Only to see you, dear. I felt I must see you to-day.

ETHEL—That's exactly the way I felt about you. Quite a coincidence.

MARIAN—Why? Had you anything to tell me?

ETHEL *(nodding violently)*—Yes. Had you anything to tell me?

MARIAN *(nodding still more violently)*

—Yes. I wanted to consult you about something.

ETHEL *(excitedly)*—It can't be—is it? Are you engaged?

MARIAN *(putting an arm round Ethel's waist)*—N-no. Not exactly. Are you?

ETHEL *(putting an arm over Marian's shoulder)*—N-no, not exactly—but the next thing to it. I was nearly proposed to at the ball last night.

MARIAN—And I'm sure I'm going to be proposed to at home this afternoon.

ETHEL—My dear! Don't tell me it's our friend, Mullen, the millionaire?

MARIAN—Richard Mullen? Yes, it is. Why not?

ETHEL—Why, he's the man I meant. He's been very attentive to me.

MARIAN—I know he has—whenever I wasn't there. I mean, whenever he wasn't with me he was with you.

ETHEL *(calmly)*—He'd propose to any one who was decently civil to him, I believe. Anyhow, I could have had him last night if I'd wanted him.

MARIAN—And why didn't you take him?

ETHEL—My dear, he really was too vulgar. I tried my best—

MARIAN *(interrupting)*—That's what I was going to do to-day—

ETHEL—But it was no good. I looked at his stubby little hands and feet, and his ferrety eyes, and his foxy nose, and his too shiny shirt, and his too flashy

diamond-and-pearl stud—and at the moment I just couldn't. I put him off, and I thought I'd come and talk it over with you to-day.

MARIAN—Little dreaming that it was my turn now. It ought to have been my turn first, I really think.

ETHEL—Well, what are you going to do about it?

MARIAN—I don't know. If you couldn't face it, I don't suppose I can, but—(pause) he's fabulously rich, Ethel.

ETHEL (sighing)—I know he is. If he only wasn't so impossible!

MARIAN—But, is he? Let us sit down and consider a little. (They draw forward two chairs and sit down.)

ETHEL—Viewing him as your property or mine?

MARIAN—Oh, we'll discuss it dispassionately. We can settle that afterward. To begin with: His personal appearance is against him.

ETHEL—Almost a scarecrow to his possessions.

MARIAN—But mamma says that when you've once got used to a man—I mean, not so much a man, as a husband, you know—you don't notice what he looks like.

ETHEL (awestruck)—Do you believe it?

MARIAN (sagely)—I think we'd better, in the present instance. Then, of course, his manners—

ETHEL—Are much too good—too much laundried, like his shirts.

MARIAN—I know—but we might rough-dry them a little.

ETHEL—And he's such a snob; pretending to be intimate with people whom he doesn't even know by sight!

MARIAN—But if one of us married him, he'd have to know everybody as a matter of course.

ETHEL—Yes—but wouldn't he be mortifying to take about with one? That's what I asked myself last night.

MARIAN (reflectively)—Perhaps a little at first. But one could snub him a lot, and, after all, if one were covered with priceless lace and jewels, people would respect one, in spite of one's husband.

ETHEL—That's very true. And one *could* dress magnificently, couldn't one? I suppose he'd be generous in pin-money.

MARIAN (reflecting again)—His eyes are rather close together. I'd have that all arranged before I married him; just where I was to live in town, and what I was to be allowed to run the house on, and where my opera-box was to be, and what horses and carriages I was to have—and I'm not sure that I should not make some stipulations about the place at Newport.

ETHEL—And I should want a yacht and a big country place.

MARIAN—My dear, you always were less simple in your tastes than I am, from the days when we went to dancing-school together, and you had two lace flounces on your dress to my one.

ETHEL—If we married Mr. Mullen, we could have lace flounces on our very bath towels.

MARIAN—That's what I'm trying to impress upon you.

ETHEL—And you think it would compensate?

MARIAN—For what?

ETHEL (shyly)—For the things novels tell about love—and companionship—and—that sort of thing, you know. (She points to an engraving of *The Huguenots on the wall*.)

MARIAN—Mamma says that after five years of married life, one man is just as good as another.

ETHEL—Yes, but for those five years?

MARIAN—Well, for those five years I'd rather live in the luxury that would reconcile me to a man I *didn't* like, than the poverty that would disgust me with a man I *did*.

ETHEL—Oh, how true that is! Well, I suppose I'd better take him.

MARIAN—You let your chance go by last night.

ETHEL—What! You mean to marry him yourself?

MARIAN—I think so. I'm going to try my best to say "Yes."

ETHEL—Upon my word, Marian, I don't think it's fair.

MARIAN—Why? You could have had him if you'd wanted him.

ETHEL—Yes, but I didn't know I wanted him.

MARIAN—I can't help that. Your reasoning powers are just as good as mine. Why didn't you use them?

ETHEL (*dismally*)—The lights were so bright, and he looked so horrid.

MARIAN (*firmly*)—I shall have the shades pulled down in the drawing-room.

ETHEL—You'd better, if you feel any doubt now.

MARIAN—I shall have the largest ruby and diamond ring from Tiffany's, and, later, a string of pearls and a diamond collar.

ETHEL—I should like a pearl collar and string of diamonds.

MARIAN—Perhaps I'll have them, too, and a crescent.

ETHEL—I'd rather have a sunburst.

MARIAN—Perhaps I'll have that, too, and a tiara.

ETHEL—I'd rather have a crown.

MARIAN—Perhaps I'll have that, too.

ETHEL (*enviously*)—It will be splendid!

MARIAN—I shall ride in the park every morning.

ETHEL—I should drive in the afternoon.

MARIAN—I shall have a house in one of the wide cross streets.

ETHEL—I should prefer Fifth Avenue.

MARIAN—No. You can get more land in a side street, and I mean to have a large house. Whitney Stanford shall build it. It will be a miracle of taste and skill—my taste and his skill. And I shall give such parties! The whole town shall ring with the account of young Mrs. Mullen's house, young Mrs. Mullen's entertainments, young Mrs. Mullen's jewels, dresses, equipages—

ETHEL (*enviously*)—Oh, you lucky girl!

MARIAN—That is—if I can make up my mind to stand young Mr. Mullen.

ETHEL (*eagerly*)—If you can't at the last minute, call me.

MARIAN—No, no, I mean to do it. He's an excellent young man, and one

ought not to let his personality weigh against him.

ETHEL—Not if one can help it.

MARIAN (*excitedly*)—There's a ring! Do I look all right? Is my hat straight? Is my front hair in curl? Was that a knock? (*Goes to door and returns with a letter.*)

ETHEL—Is it from him?

MARIAN (*opening it*)—Yes, I suppose he couldn't trust himself to speak. (*Reads*) "Dear Miss Marian." (*Speaks*) How I detest being called 'Miss Marian'! (*Continues reading.*) "When I promised myself the pleasure of calling upon you this afternoon I little anticipated the joyful circumstances which prevent me, for the moment, from keeping my word." (*Speaks*) I suppose he has managed to unearth another million or two. (*Reads*) "To my unbounded surprise and delight, Mrs. Climber, with whom I was lunching to-day, has promised to become my wife." (*Breaks off.*) Mrs. Climber! The snake! The wily opossum! Why, only the other day she told me he was "outside the pale!"

ETHEL—Of course she did, my dear, when she thought he was attentive to you. Never trust a widow!

MARIAN (*continuing to read*)—"Knowing that you have been my friend, ever since I first came to New York, I trust that you will like to be among the first to congratulate me, and I shall venture to run in some time late to-morrow afternoon in hopes of finding you disengaged and in the kindly humor you have ever displayed toward me. Believe me, my dear Miss Marian, sincerely yours, Richard Mullen." (*Speaks*) Now, what do you think of that?

ETHEL—I think they are very well matched. No decent woman would take him.

MARIAN—That's what I was thinking. He really is vulgarity personified.

ETHEL—Nothing can make up to a woman for that.

MARIAN—No, indeed, my dear. Not to a nice woman.

ETHEL—I always feel that there's something so coarse about a mercenary marriage.

MARIAN—So do I.

ETHEL—As if riches could ever make up for having to spend one's life in the society of an underbred person.

MARIAN—How true that is! Only, I'm afraid worldly people wouldn't agree with you.

ETHEL—They will when they see how Mrs. Mullen is cut in spite of all her money. He was only tolerated while he was a bachelor. I, for one, shall make a point of ignoring them when they are married.

MARIAN—So shall I.

ETHEL—And what shall you do about to-morrow afternoon?

MARIAN—I shall leave word that I am not at home. I shall *never* be at home to Mr. Mullen again, unless something very unforeseen should occur.

ETHEL—My dear, what do you mean?

MARIAN—Well, if the engagement should be broken off, you know—one can never tell. And if the fool repents of his folly, I, for one, should feel it wrong to withhold the right hand of—fellowship from him.



THE LIGHTS O' HOME

O TWENTY ships in Bantry Bay,
 Good-by to the lights o' home:
 For a lad's heart's one with the wandering wind
 And ever a lad must roam;
 Twenty hands mayn't stay him.
 Or twenty hearts delay him,
 The sails are spread in Bantry Bay,
 Good-by to the lights o' home.

Over the world to Bantry Bay,
 Win home, lad, at the last:
 For a man's heart's fain to anchor there
 And furl the sail to the mast.
 And a thousand suns mayn't blind him,
 Or a thousand leagues mayn't bind him,
 For the light that shines o'er Bantry Bay
 Will lead him home at last.

ARTHUR KETCHUM.

LESLIE WOOD

Translated from the French of Anatole France

A CONCERT and a comedy were being given that night at the house of Madam N——, in the Boulevard Malesherbes.

The younger people hovered about a *pärterre* of naked shoulders in the doorway, stifling amid warm perfumes; but we, older and rather irritable folk, had withdrawn to a little drawing-room where there was fresh air to breathe, though nothing to be seen. The voice of Mademoiselle Réjane came to us like the slightly strident whir of a dragon-fly's wings. From time to time, we heard laughter and applause from the furnace within; and we were inclined to consider pityingly a pleasure that we were not sharing. We were exchanging pretty nothings of conversation, when one of our party, an agreeable deputy, Monsieur B——, said, abruptly:

"By the way, did you know that Wood is here to-night?"

"Wood? Leslie Wood?" we exclaimed, in turn. "Why, it isn't possible. He hasn't been seen in Paris in ten years. Nobody knows what has become of him."

"They say he founded a black republic on the shores of Lake Victoria-Nyanza."

"Oh, that's a yarn. He's immensely rich, you know, and a great realizer of impossibilities. He lives in Ceylon, in a fairy palace that is set amid enchanted gardens, where bayaderes dance for him day and night."

"How can you believe such stupid rot? The facts of the case are, that Leslie Wood, armed with a Bible and a carbine, went out to evangelize the Zulus."

"Here's here to-night, nevertheless," said Monsieur B——, in a low voice. "Look."

Then, with a movement of the head and eyes, he pointed to a man standing in the doorway, whose great height permitted him to see above the mass of heads before him, and who seemed to be absorbed in watching the play.

His athletic stature, his florid face and white side-beard, his clear, calm eye, all marked him plainly, Leslie Wood.

Recalling the admirable letters he had written to the *London World* for ten years, I said to B——:

"That man is the greatest journalist of his day."

"Perhaps you are right," replied B——. "At any rate, I can assure you that twenty years ago no man knew Europe as well as Leslie Wood."

Baron Moses, who had been listening to us, shook his head in dissent.

"You don't know Wood," he interposed. "I know him. He was, first of all, a financier. He had a better understanding of business than anybody I ever met. Why do you smile, princess?"

This to the Princess Zévorine, who, reclining on a sofa, was too bored even to smoke a cigarette.

"Because none of you understand Wood. He has never been anything but a mystic and a lover."

"I don't agree with you," replied Baron Moses. "But I'd like to know where this fool of a man has been spending the ten best years of his life."

"Which do you consider the ten best years of one's life?"

"From fifty to sixty; one's position is attained, and one can enjoy life."

"Baron, you can ask your question of Wood himself. Here he comes."

At this moment a wild outburst of applause announced the final curtain

of the comedy. The men withdrew from the doorways into the little drawing-room, and as the line of couples proceeded toward the buffet, Leslie Wood came up to us.

He grasped our hands with a kind of placid cordiality.

"*Un revenant!*" exclaimed Baron Moses.

"I could not come back from very far," said Wood, "this world is such a small place."

"Do you know what the princess has been saying? She said you are a pure mystic, my dear Wood. Is that so?"

"That depends what one means by a mystic."

"The word explains itself. A mystic is one that concerns himself with the other world. You are too well occupied with the affairs of this world to bother yourself with those of the other."

At these words a slight frown appeared on Wood's brow.

"You're mistaken, Moses," he replied, "the affairs of the other world are much more important—oh, much more important."

"Dear old Leslie Wood," laughed the baron, "he always was clever."

"Tell me, Wood," the princess gravely interposed, "you are not clever, are you? I have a perfect horror of clever people." She rose from the sofa. "Wood, take me to the buffet."

An hour later, while Monsieur G— was entertaining the ladies and gentlemen with his songs, I found Leslie Wood and the Princess Zévorine standing alone before the buffet.

The princess was talking with an almost barbaric enthusiasm of Count Tolstoy, of whom she was a friend. She drew a portrait of the great man who had become a simple one, wearing the garb and emulating the soul of a moujik, and, with those hands that had penned masterpieces, making shoes for the poor.

To my great surprise, Wood commended this idea of life, so contrary to common sense. He spoke in a hardly noticeable drawl; and an incipient asthma gave to his tones a curious note of tenderness.

"Yes," he said, "Tolstoy is right. All philosophy is comprised in this sentence: 'May the will of God be done!' Tolstoy understood that all the evils of humanity are the result of man's will being contrary to that of God. I fear only one thing, lest he ruin his beautiful doctrine by fantasy and exaggeration."

"Oh," replied the princess, in a low voice, and rather hesitatingly, "the doctrine of the count is exaggerated only on one point: It prolongs to the most advanced age the rights and duties of married people, and enjoins to the saints of later days the fertile old age of the patriarchs."

"Excellent and wholesome," replied old Wood, with subdued enthusiasm. "Natural physical love is proper to all God's creatures, and, if there be not mixed with it trouble or disquiet, it takes on a divine simplicity, a holy animalism without which there is no salvation. Asceticism is merely pride and revolt. Let us keep in mind the example of the rich man Boaz, and remember that the Bible makes love the bread of old men."

Then suddenly he seemed rapt, illuminated, transfigured in ecstasy, and with eyes, arms and all his soul he murmured as if to some one invisible:

"Annie, Annie, well-beloved, is it not true that the Saviour wishes his children to love each other with the humility of the beasts of the field?"

He sank exhausted into a chair. A gasping breathing shook his massive chest. Yet now he looked more powerful than ever, as a mighty piece of machinery seems more formidable in wreckage.

Princess Zévorine, apparently not astonished, brushed his forehead with her handkerchief and gave him a glass of water.

As for me, I was astounded. In this strangely exalted being I could not recognize the man, who, in his room littered with Blue Books, had so often talked with me so lucidly about affairs of the Orient, the Frankfort Treaty and the crises of our financial markets.

I allowed the princess to observe my

disquietude. She said to me, with shrugging shoulders:

"Oh, but you're a thorough Frenchman! You believe that everybody that doesn't think exactly as you think is insane. Calm yourself. Our friend Wood is sane, quite sane. Let us go and hear G— sing."

After I had escorted the princess into the large drawing-room, I got ready to go home. In the coatroom I met Wood. He was putting on his coat; and showed no traces of the excitement through which he had passed.

"My dear fellow," he said to me, "I believe we are neighbors. You are still living on the Quai Malaquais, and I am stopping in a hotel in the Rue des Saints-Pères. It is a beautiful night to walk. If you like, we'll go together and talk."

I was very glad to accept the invitation. When we reached the steps he offered me a cigar and gave me a light from an electric lighter.

"It's a very useful little thing," he said, and proceeded to explain to me the theory of the lighter.

I was beginning to recognize the Leslie Wood of former days.

We had gone about a hundred steps on our way, talking of indifferent subjects. Suddenly my companion laid his hand gently on my shoulder, saying:

"Friend, perhaps some of the things I've said to-night have surprised you. Perhaps you would like me to explain them?"

"I am deeply interested, my dear Wood."

"I shall have great pleasure, then, for I respect your mind. We don't look at life in the same way. But ideas don't frighten you, and that's not a common courage, especially in France."

"Still, I believe, Wood, that for liberty of thought——"

"Oh, of course. You are not a nation of theologians, as the English are. But let that pass. I would like to tell you in a very few words the history of my ideas."

"When you knew me fifteen years ago, I was the correspondent of the

London *World*. Journalism in England is much more lucrative and more of a profession than it is here. I had a good post, and I think I made the best of it. I understand business, I made some very successful ventures, and, in a few years, I possessed two enviable advantages: influence and money.

"I have never acted without an end in view; but I have always had my mind fixed on the supreme end of all, the aim and object of life. I made a pretty thorough study of theology in my younger days, as a result of which I was convinced that this supreme end lies beyond our earthly existence. But I was pestered by doubts as to the practical means of reaching it. Uncertainty is simply intolerable to a man of my nature."

"In this state of mind, I began to give serious attention to the psychical researches of Sir William Crookes, one of the most distinguished members of the Royal Academy. I knew him personally, and knew him to be a *savant* and a gentleman. At this time he was experimenting with a young person, who was endowed with extraordinary psychical gifts, and, as was Saul in other days, he was favored with the presence of an authentic spirit."

"A charming woman, who had once lived our life, and who was now living the life beyond the tomb, gave herself up to the experiments of the eminent psychist, and submitted herself to all that he exacted within the bounds of reason. It was my belief that such investigations of the borderland between this existence and the one beyond would lead me, if I followed them step by step, to the discovery of that which it is necessary to know, the real end of life. But it was not long before I found that my hopes were false. The researches of my esteemed friend, though governed by a precision that left nothing to be desired, did not result in a sufficiently exact conclusion of theology and morals."

"Moreover, Sir William Crookes was suddenly deprived of the incomparable aid of the dead woman who had gra-

ciously accorded him several psychic audiences.

"Discouraged by the incredulity of the public and hurt by the raillery of his associates, he ceased to publish anything on the subject of psychic knowledge.

"I told the story of my disappointment to the Reverend Mr. Burthogge, of whom I had been a friend since his return from South Africa, a country he had been evangelizing with a mind at once religious and practical, worthy of old England.

"Of all the men I have known, Mr. Burthogge is the one whose influence has always had the strongest and most decisive effect on me."

"He is a very intelligent man, then?" I inquired.

"He is very learned in theology," Leslie Wood replied; "but, above all things, he has a great character. And don't forget, my friend, that it is character which prevails on men. He seemed not at all surprised by the failure of my spiritual inquiry. He attributed it to the fault of my methods, but, above all, to the pitiable moral infirmity that I gave evidence of in the circumstances.

"Scientific research," he told me, 'can lead only to scientific discovery. How did you overlook that great point? For Leslie Wood you acted in a strangely light and frivolous manner. To discover spiritual truth one must enter by the door of the spirit.'

"His words made a profound impression on me.

"Reverend sir," I asked him, 'how shall I enter the door of the spirit?'

"By poverty and simplicity. Sell your goods and give the proceeds to the poor. You are famous. Bury yourself. Pray, and do good works. Be simple of heart, pure of soul, and you shall attain to truth.'

"I resolved to follow his injunctions to the letter. I resigned as correspondent of the *World*.

"I got hold of my money, most of which was tied up in investments, and fearful of repeating the sin of Ananias and Sapphira, I carried out this difficult task so adroitly that I did not lose a cent of the capital that no longer be-

longed to me. Baron Moses, who surveyed my operations, conceived an almost religious admiration for my talent in finance. At the advice of Mr. Burthogge, I poured all this money into the treasury of the Evangelical Society.

"I was telling him once how happy I was to be poor.

"Be careful,' he warned me, 'lest in your poverty you take too much joy out of the triumph of your energy. What doth it avail to strip one's self of all, if one cherishes within the idol of gold? Be humble.'

Leslie Wood was at this part of his narrative when we reached the Pont Royal. The Seine, whose bosom trembled with light, flowed under the arches of the bridge with a low murmur.

"I must cut my story short," he resumed. "It would take me a whole night to describe in full each single episode of my new life. Burthogge, whom I obeyed as a parent, sent me to the Basutos with the mission to combat the treaty with the blacks. Out there I lived in a tent, with that generous bedfellow called danger, and in fever and in thirst seeing God.

"At the end of five years Mr. Burthogge summoned me back to England. On the steamer I met a young woman. She was a beautiful vision, an apparition a thousand times more brilliant than the phantom revealed to Sir William Crookes.

"She was poor, and the orphaned daughter of a colonel in the Indian Army. She had not the lines of beauty, exactly. Her pale complexion, her worn features showed that she had suffered. But her eyes expressed all that one can imagine of heaven. Her flesh seemed translucent with a glow of light from within. How I loved her! When I saw her, it seemed to me I had penetrated the hidden meaning of all creation. The glance alone of this simple girl revealed to me the secret of the harmony of the worlds.

"Indeed, she was quite simple, my initiator into these divine mysteries, my well-beloved, dear Annie Fraser!

"I read in her transparent soul the sympathy she had for me. One night,

one clear night, as we were all alone on the bridge, in the presence of the seraphim of stars that palpitated in unison in the heavens, I took her hand and said:

"Annie, I love you. I feel that it were well that you should be my wife, but I have forbidden myself to direct my own destiny, in order that God may govern it. I have given all guidance into the hands of Mr. Burthogge. When we reach England, if you will, we shall go together to him, and if he approves, we shall marry."

"She agreed to my request. During the remainder of the voyage we read the Bible together.

"As soon as we arrived in London I took her to Mr. Burthogge, and told him how much the love of this young girl meant to me, and with what beautiful light it filled my soul.

"He looked at her with kindly eyes for some moments.

"You may marry each other," he said. "St. Paul said, 'Husband and wife sanctify each other.' But let your union be in honor, as was that of the Christians in the early days of the church. Let it be purely one of spirit, and may the sword of the Angel always lie between you. Go, be humble and hidden, and keep your name from the world."

"I married Annie Fraser, and I need not tell you that we observed faithfully the law that had been laid upon us. For four years I lived and was happy in this union.

"By the grace of Annie, simple woman, I grew in the knowledge of God. Nothing now could cause us suffering.

"Annie fell ill. Her strength wore away, but we said, ungrievingly, 'May God's will be done on earth and in heaven!'

"At the end of four years of this union, one day, Christmas day, Mr. Burthogge sent for me.

"'Leslie Wood,' he said to me, 'I laid upon you a salutary trial. Yet to believe that it displeaseth God that his creatures should be joined in the flesh, were to fall into the error of the papists. On two occasions, in the Garden of Eden

and in Noah's Ark, did he bless the union of men and of beasts. Go now, and henceforth live with Annie Fraser, your spouse, as a man with his wife.'

"When I returned home, Annie, my beloved Annie, was dead. . . .

"I confess my sin, I said with the lips, but not with the heart: 'May God's will be done!' And musing on what Mr. Burthogge had just said to me, my mouth was full of bitterness, my heart of ashes.

"In this desolation of soul, I knelt at the foot of the bed on which Annie lay, silent and white, the pale violets of death on her cheeks.

"Man of little faith that I was, I bade her farewell; and for a week I was sunk in barren woe, that was almost despair. On the contrary, how greatly ought I to have rejoiced in soul and body! . . .

"On the night of the eighth day, as I wept over the cold, empty bed, I suddenly was impressed with the feeling that my beloved was near me, in my room.

"I was not mistaken. Raising my head, I saw Annie, luminous and smiling, holding her arms open to me. . . . But how shall I say more? How express the inexpressible? And ought one reveal such mysteries of love?

"I am sure that when Mr. Burthogge said to me, 'Live with Annie as a man with his wife, he knew that love was stronger than death.

"Well, my friend, you must know that since that hour of grace and joy, each night, odorous of heavenly airs, she returns to me."

He was speaking with fierce intensity.

We had slackened our steps. He stood still before a hotel of rather shabby appearance.

"Here's where I am staying," he said. "Do you see that window—on the second story? See the light? She is waiting for me."

He left me without another word.

Eight days later I read in the papers of the sudden death of Leslie Wood, formerly the correspondent of the *London World*.

CAVIAR AND CHAMPAGNE

By Edgar Saltus

THE Queen of Italy has written a book. This lady is a very pretty woman. When a woman has the wit to be pretty, she has fulfilled every duty in life. Anything further is a surfeit of sweets. These views, poor, indeed, and perhaps not entirely our own, have prevented us from examining her wares. Besides, we do not believe in royal literature. This lady is not the only one to try a hand at it. The Queen of Roumania is also a literary person. The amount of rubbish which she has produced is amazing. The Queen of Servia—not the present incumbent, but her mother-in-law—is another lady whose platitudes we have circumspectly avoided. Then, there is, or, rather, there was, V. R., whom Beaconsfield, with his "We authors," flattered so basely.

It is a pleasure, of course, to be in trade with women so superior. But we have noted that superior women are always long-winded. We have noticed, also, that platitudes are not confined to queens. These things form the specialty of our best-selling novelists. Our best-selling novelists are moral. That is commendable. But they are hypocrite. That is crime. Society is not exclusively composed of their slim heroines and immaculate *poscurs*. Love is not wholly limited to the communion of souls. In scenes of a worldly character, whether historical, contemporaneous or merely smart, people have never passed, and never will pass, their lives in uninterrupted ignorance of sin. If they did, we should have no need of religion. Yet, inasmuch as they don't, what we do need are not pages evolved from life as it ought to be, but pages torn from life as it is.

It is the former we get, and the latter we lack. But Time, who is always a gentleman, will bring us our due, unasked. Time will take these books and put them where they belong. In their place, suffering humanity will be provided with something fit. Instead of historical novels, apoplectic, asinine, and anachronistic, there will be mirrors held up to life. Instead of the tedious *tables d'hôte* of assassinateable bores, there will be swift courses of wit and truth. Instead of *purées* of cant and bad grammar, there will be dishes of caviar and cups of champagne. That is the kind of banquet that Time has in store, and at which, for ages, his *chefs* have been working.

Indeed they have! We have a pretext for these remarks. We have something better. We have a text. The text is furnished by Dr. Georg Brandes. This writer, a Danish critic, has stuck a finger in the pie, or, more exactly, in the *Handelstidning*. The *Handelstidning*—delightful name—is a periodical published at Göteborg. In this sheet, Dr. Brandes, with enviable erudition, shows how the sculleries first were cleared.

Dr. Brandes cites the library of the Ptolomies, which was burned. He cites the destruction of the Serapeion. He cites the good work done by the Caliph Omar. He enumerates the tragedies that are lost, the dramas that are gone. He tells about the submergence of this bore, and of that. He relates these things—others, too—with, as we have said, enviable erudition, and with enviable memory, also, for they have all been related before, particularly in the fifth chapter of Stapfer's "Réputations Littéraires."

And why not? There are people that

affect to object to this sort of thing. But such objection seems to us highly philistine and deplorably bourgeois. The reminiscent method is one which all reputable authors adopt and which all self-respecting critics may. In the library of the Ptolomies, as in the Temple of Serapis, there must have been many an example of it.

In the good old days of Sardanapalus this excellent method was in vogue. The evidence is contained in tablets recently exhumed, and which we will not quote, lest we seem to know more than we do. The method, moreover, had the approval of Vergil, of Milton, of Shakespeare, and of Goethe. They all had their hands in other people's paragraphs. Of the lot, Shakespeare was the most industrious. The fashion in which he memorized Cinthio is particularly nice.

Cinthio was guilty of a hundred novels and a thousand crimes. At an hour when ink blushed less readily than at present, he went about collecting data, which he set up in black and white. In default of linen from his neighbor, sometimes he washed his own. In a pretty woman he saw not her eyes, but a plot, and from her heart he proceeded to dig it. There is the proper thing. That is the way Balzac did. That is the way Flaubert did, also. Were it practiced to-day, fiction would be less namby-pamby. But we will get to that shortly. The point is that, in the observance of this method, Cinthio produced the story of Othello and Desdemona. Shakespeare saw it, saw that it was appetizing, and bagged it. He did not stop there. He hunted further, and took from Cinthio, "Measure for Measure." Then he turned to pastures new. He relieved Lodge of "As You Like It," Greene of "The Winter's Tale," and Luigi da Porto of "Romeo and Juliet." He took these things—others, too. He sacked everybody, right and left, and God bless him for it. Said Dumas, who was quite as industrious: "These pages with which I am accused of eloping, are so many young women who were not in good company, and whom I have put where they belong."

And he was right. In matters of this

kind, it has long ceased to be important whether a writer has lifted anything or not. The one point to be considered is whether he embellished what he took.

For Dr. Brandes' accomplishments, we have, therefore, only applause and a few footnotes. In his article he omits to mention the loss of Musæus. Yet, then, Stapfer does, too, and that is a most excellent reason. Musæus, however, was a bore as big as any of those whom he cites, and it is a real pleasure to signal him to him. Here, though, is another kettle of fish. He omits Elephantis, whose extraordinary fantasies charmed the equally extraordinary leisures of Tiberius. He further omits Aristides of Milet, whose romances of Ionian nights the legions took with them on an occasion when they tried to do up the Parthians, and which, found among the booty, were read aloud to the people, that they might judge the relaxations of a nation that pretended to rule the roost.

But how alarming is all this information! We apologize for it. It has a false air of learning which is not in our line. We have no pedantic familiarity with the subject, or, for that matter, with any other. We are able, at most—and with great difficulty—to recall that in these romances there were no cymbals sounded to the proprieties. To thin women and the communion of souls, the lyre was never strummed. They offered no small talk sprayed with vichy-water. They were the simple *délassements* of a master of art, who knew nothing of hypocrisy and less of cant. And very naturally. In his day these endearments did not exist.

Had you lived at that time, you could have prayed in temples that never heard an atheist's voice. You could have encountered divinities and monsters, curious superstitions and untellable creeds. You could have wandered from palace to slum, from prison to shrine. You could have examined radiant altars, probed hideous secrets, scrutinized magnificent crimes. Yet nowhere would you have found hypocrisy. Nowhere would you have discovered cant. These are the blessings of our civilization.

These are the charms of the literature of to-day.

What Time shall do to the latter is not problematic. He will pitch it into the gutter, where it belongs, where mediocrity always does belong, and where it always gets in the end. That is precisely what Time did to the platitudes of the past. The samples that have survived were not, as historical writers amusingly suppose, saved by selection or spared by chance. There was none of the one, and there is no such thing as the other. Their survival is due to the fact that they were too light to sink. The survival of that which is fit in ancient literature is due to the fact that there are works that cannot die.

Of them we will mention but one. Its primal home was a Theban library. There a young man entered. A noble thirst consumed him. He wanted to be known. To slake his thirst, he took the book and swallowed it whole. Then he recomposed it, called it "The Iliad," and gave it to the world. Years after the library was burned. In the fire the original was lost. But "The Iliad" remained.

It will be seen, therefore, that the second-story method has a precedent, and a sanction quite archaic. It will be seen, also, that there are books that are born to live. But how many of them are published to-day? Surely, not so many as we see advertised. Surely, not all the best-selling novels. Surely, not the million works which this country, with its bumper-crop fecundity has produced.

A million is about the number which the library of the Ptolomies held. The world has proceeded very cheerfully without them. Were our local libraries to perish, we assume that the world would proceed as cheerfully as before. More cheerfully, even, for it would be divested of a burden of solemn lies and paretic trash. It would be lightened of ton after ton of drivel which, through an hypocrisy natural and national, our young in letters, who should be guarded from the contamination of infectious stupidity, are taught to regard as models of form and grace.

That is all wrong. Our young in letters will have a duty to perform. It will be their office to entertain. A novelist has no other duty but that. Unless he fail. In which case it is his duty to hold his peace. Yet, if he succeed, the methods employed are immaterial. To those who cannot think of any other, we may commend the second-story plan. What was good enough for their betters should be good enough for them. Apart from which it is more judicious to adopt old ways of being witty than new ways of being dull. However honest the latter may be, it is wrong to regard them as evidence of original thought. Besides, originality in the strict sense no one possesses. Wit, like life, is transmitted by infusion.

It is wit that we crave. A dose of it would do our literature good. It would do more. It would act as an emetic to the stuff on which, for years, we have fed.

If it did but that, we should have cause to be grateful. Then, too, the dose is so easily prepared. Wit is but the humdrum in fancy dress, the ability to see things differently from your neighbor. There was precious little of it in the rubbish of the past. From that rubbish the *chefs* of Time have spared us. Apart from publishers and the servants' hall, there is nobody anywhere that would not thank God to be spared from the rubbish of to-day.

This rubbish is, we are aware, absorbed by the public. But, then, how many idiots does it take to make a public? Besides, what are the poor devils to do? We have heard swine denounced because they feed on swill. But that is all they get. They may take it or go hollow. Yet, put before them caviar and champagne, and they will gobble it, lick their chops, and grunt for more. It is the same way with the public. The novels turned out for general consumption are nauseous in stupidity. Through them runs a poverty of thought appalling enough to make the rest of us tear our hair in the agony of the anguish of the resulting boredom.

That is not right. Life is not made up of scenery, platitudes and bad gram-

mar. Life is made up of delight and torture, greed and hate, love and indifference, passion and despair. It is made up of emotions, not pap, and it is pap that we get for our money. By way of compensation, we are enabled to regard ourselves as a moral people. It is a pity that, as a people, we cannot look in a glass. It would break—that glass would. Yet, though we cannot look in it, others have held it up.

Among them is Stendhal. A little while ago, a few decades, at most, he expressed himself as follows:

"La moralité américaine me semble d'une abominable vulgarité et en lisant les ouvrages de leurs hommes distingués, je n'éprouve qu'un seul désir, c'est de ne jamais les rencontrer." How he would feel toward our best-selling novelists it is agreeable to fancy and uncivil to print.

Said another authority, and a higher one still: "Read books which are good, books which are bad, never those that are mediocre." To which we may add that a false conception of religion is the cause of mediocrity in art, a false conception of morality is the cause of mediocrity in prose, and that in both respects our national crimes are appalling.

These crimes we have heard condoned on the ground that they possess the indorsement of public opinion. That only makes them the more flagrant. For what is public opinion but the stupidity of one multiplied by the stupidity of all? And what are artists and writers for, except to deliver their fallen people out of the slavery of natural stupidity. Instead of which, here, at least, they cater to it.

That is not right, either. It is particularly iniquitous in view of the second-story method and the fact that of any book there is but one criterion: Is it well written or is it not? Therein

is all the law and, sooner or later, and the sooner the better, therein, too, will be all the profits.

In those profits the question of morality will be important. The question of pleasing will be important, too. And naturally. In the art of pleasing is the whole secret of mediocrity. In the art of being moral is the whole secret of being dull. "Try to please," said Epictetus, "and you are lost." "Be good and you will be lonesome," added Mark Twain, who must have had the dismal future of contemporary novelists in view.

Yet, then, are these cheap trippers in the lovely land of letters so moral, after all? Psychology rather doubts it. Morality in fiction never has consisted and never will consist in situations suggested. It consists in the symptoms which those situations induce. If they induce disgust, yawns and narcosis, their effect is precisely the same as coarseness provokes. If they bore, they are worthless and unreadable.

If they shock, they are unreadable, and worthless, too.

But if they have in them qualities capable of detaining the attention of the polite, then though they display the seven cardinal sins, though they exhibit the whole menagerie of vices, unconsciously the reader is led by them into that temple which Marcus Aurelius dedicated to compassion, to charity and to abnegation of self.

Are we wrong, Balzac? Shade of Flaubert, do we err?

Wrong or right, there are two ghosts worth contemplating. We have nothing like them to-day. When their successors come, as they must and will—*post tenebras, lux*—they will bring with them art of the same high order, and with it what we are all looking for—tables of contents set with caviar and champagne.

BEFORE THE BAR

By Will N. Harben

Author of "Abner Daniel," "Northern Georgia Sketches," "Westerfelt," Etc.

OLD Mrs. Darby and her daughter-in-law stood in the back door of their cabin and saw the sheriff alight from his buggy and trudge across the ploughed ground to where Jabe, the husband of the younger woman, was digging a ditch in the field he had rented for the next year.

There was an altercation, which the brisk breeze blew away from the two women and they saw from Jabe's defiant attitude, as he clutched the handle of his pick, that there was about to be trouble, but a revolver was drawn by the stalwart officer and Jabe was seen to drop his tool and the two men came slowly toward the cabin.

"He's under arrest," said the young man's mother, with a white face. "Oh, my Lord! I 'lowed the trouble was over an' that we'd have a little peace. I reckon it's jest beginnin'."

The black eyes of the young wife gleamed angrily. "It's all the work of his stepdaddy," she panted. "Ef I had the old devil in my power I'd choke 'im to death. Ike Darby's had this done, I tell you, an' it's to spite you beca'se you left 'im. He told Gid Ware he believed that nigger helped Jabe burn his barn an' that he'd paid a detective to chase 'im. Mother, do you reckon they've ketched Hank?"

Mrs. Darby sat down tremblingly, unable to reply. She had allowed her son, who was really a desperate young man of bad character, to persuade her to desert his stepfather, with whom Jabe and her daughter-in-law had never been able to get along, but she rarely uttered a word against him. In truth, she could recall no instance in which

Ike Darby had been unkind to her. Her first husband, Jabe's father, used to beat her when in liquor, and Darby, if stubborn and self-willed, was certainly, as husbands go, an improvement in many ways. It was only because of the continual quarreling between him and her son, which had culminated in the burning of the old man's barn, and the startling accusation on the part of old Ike that Jabe and a negro accomplice had committed the deed, that she finally left him to live with the young people.

"I've got to go to town with this feller," said Jabe Harris, lightly, as he and the sheriff approached. "Annie, git my coat."

"What you got to go to town fer, Jabe?" asked the young woman, fiercely. "Mr. Murray, what'd you come out here after Jabe fer?"

The officer looked abashed, but he replied in about the same tone he would have used had he been suddenly called on in court to deliver unpleasant information.

"They've ketched Hank Wartrace, the nigger that used to work fer Jabe," he replied. "They say he's confessed to helpin' Jabe burn the barn. They got 'im in jail now an' have swore out a warrant for Jabe. The committal trial is set for in the mornin'. Thar ain't nothin' left fer Jabe to do, Mrs. Harris, but to stand trial."

"Oh, I won't have no trouble comin' clear," said the prisoner, as he went into the cabin and returned, drawing on his coat. "The old man jest hatched the whole thing up to spite me'n mother."

The sheriff was looking down toward

his horse. "Ef you've got a gun in that coat pocket," he said, "I'd advise you to drap it. You'll have enough trouble with this matter without bein' rearrested fer totin' concealed firearms before you git out o' the courthouse."

Jabe paused; he and his wife exchanged glances, and he took something from his pocket and tossed it on the bed behind him. "I reckon you are right," he said, grimly.

When Jabe and the sheriff had driven off, Mrs. Darby sat silently in the doorway for several minutes. Then she put on her gingham sunbonnet and went across the meadow to her husband's cottage. Near the cottage she passed the blackened ruins of the barn, and with a steady step, albeit her body was bent, she went in at the front door. She found no one in any of the four rooms, but Ike was in the back yard building a pigpen out of refused rails from his pasture fence. He saw her coming, gave her one hard, stern stare, shrugged his shoulders and went on with his work.

"Ike Darby," she said, pushing back her bonnet, "did you know Jabe was arrested jest now?"

The old man dropped a quid of tobacco into his palm, looked at it to see if it were of further use, and tossed it aside.

"I seed the sheriff go 'long the road jest now," he replied. "I wondered wnat he was out after, but it wasn't any o' my business an' so I didn't ax 'im what was up. I seed 'im an' Jabe on the way to town jest 'fore you called an' left yore visitin' card in the settin'-room. I reckon mebbey he's deputized Jabe to he'p 'im arrest somebody. Anyways, I reckon Jabe'll sleep in town to-night. Ef he's under arrest, as you say, it is jest what I've expected a long time. No young buck kin ride roughshod over human bein's an' apply the torch here an' yan regyardless o' consequences without runnin' up agin' a snag some time or other. The Lord Almighty made justice an' put his brand on it to signify that it was a good thing. I reckon it is. I've never had enough of it to judge."

"Ike Darby," the voice of the old woman rang out sharply. "You've done this to spite me 'case I left you, an' I want you to withdraw the charge agin' my pore boy, so I do. That's what I've humbled myself to come an' ax."

Darby was short and scrawny, and the broad-brimmed, flat-crowned hat he wore made the weazened face beneath it appear small and peaked. His eyes were inflamed with cold and he kept rubbing them with a soiled red handkerchief.

"I told you I was willin' to do that two weeks ago," he said, firmly, the sarcastic note rising higher in his voice. "I told you I'd come across ef you'd acknowledge that Jabe did the devilment an' would come back an' do a wife's duty by me. But how did you treat my proposition? You spit at me an' snarled like a wildcat an' said you'd rather see me laid out than to live with me another minute."

"I was desperate then," faltered Mrs. Darby. "A woman ain't responsible when her own child is in trouble."

"Well, it's too late now," returned the old man. "I had Hank arrested an' he has confessed. Jabe'll have to stand trial."

"Do you intend to swear agin' him, Ike Darby?"

"I intend to swear the truth," was the answer. "I know the two did the devilment, an' I think it will be fetched out at the trial."

The wrath of the old woman rose superior to her fears as to her son's safety.

"Ef you do try to put 'im in the penitentiary you'll live to wish you hadn't," she said, with blazing eyes, as she turned to go. "I'll never believe my boy burnt nobody's barn, even ef you did nag 'im an' aggravate 'im mighty nigh to death. Ef he was yore flesh and blood you wouldn't, nuther."

The next morning Gideon Ware and his portly wife came over in their road wagon, a heavy red-wheeled affair, in which they had placed several chairs, and took Mrs. Darby and Mrs. Harris to the trial.

When they had driven into the little town they found that they would not be allowed to hold conversation with Jabe until he was brought into court and so, slightly depressed by this legal restriction, they sat on the grass in the courtyard until the crowd gathered and filled the courtroom. Then they went in and seats were given them inside the railing, a portion of the room reserved for lawyers, witnesses, and people concerned in court matters.

Old Darby was a pathetic-looking figure, with his parchment skin, red eyes, and short trousers, but he maintained an erect bearing as he came in and took his seat beside the State solicitor, who at once began to question him and pencil notes on a paper in his hand. The observant wife of the prisoner did not like Ike's manner. As he crossed his short legs and now and then whispered in the ear of the lawyer he had the appearance of a man who knew exactly what he was there for. She began to fear that Jabe was over-confident and that he did not have as strong a case as he thought.

Presently the black prisoner was brought into court and Mrs. Harris tried to read his heavy, sullen face, but he refused to look at any one, keeping his eyes on the floor. There was a depressing something in this, too; the young wife reflected that had he not really made a confession harmful to her husband he surely would have given her and Jabe's mother a hopeful glance. Then Jabe was brought in. He looked at his wife and smiled, but she read doubt and fear in his eyes. He looked as if he had spent a sleepless night. He sat down by his lawyer, a young man whose name was Thorn, and for several minutes they were in deep conversation. Then he rose and came back to her.

"Don't look so scared," he whispered, as he bent over her. "Yo're as white as a sheet."

She caught his hand and clung to it. "How do you think it's a-goin', Jabe?" she asked, anxiously.

He glanced about the room before replying, then he said: "I cayn't tell till Hank testifies. I hain't been able to see 'im nur git a word to 'im by hook ur

crook. Mr. Thorn says they raily did worm a sort o' confession out o' him, by makin' all kinds o' promises, but Hank may take it back when he's put on oath an' ef he does I'm solid. You see the jail is mighty nigh packed full right now an' Hank spent last night in the same cell with Tobe Kelly—he was jailed last week fer sellin' moonshine whisky. Tobe's as sharp as a brier an' the best friend I got. I'll bet he worked on that nigger last night. I seed him as I passed his cell this mornin' an' he give me a wink. I ketched Hank's eye, too, an' I'll bet a yoke o' steers he's a-goin' to stan' by me. He's a-feared not to."

Jabe went back to his seat, and the judge took off his hat and laid it on the table in front of him. This signified that he was ready to proceed with the business in hand.

The first witness was Ike Darby, who, when called, went to the witness box with a slow and deliberate step.

"Now, Mr. Darby," began the State solicitor, as he leaned on the back of his chair and clasped his hands over an unlighted cigar, "just tell the court all you know about this case from the very beginning."

Old Darby cleared his throat and ran his long, bony fingers through his disheveled hair. He hitched his heel up on the rung of his chair and slowly rubbed his patched knee.

"I'll do the best I kin," he began, calmly; "but I hain't much of a public speaker. I'm here to say on oath, though, that Jabe Harris, my stepson, an' that nigger down thar fired my barn. The trouble started when Jabe was a-livin' off of me an' begun to talk about marryin' a woman I had every bit as little use fer as I had fer him. He told folks round about that he was a-gwine to fetch 'er to my house. I told 'im he'd better think it over an' that she wasn't no woman fer even as triflin' a scamp as he was to marry."

Here a laugh rippled over the courtroom. Jabe and his wife were seen to join in it, but the bailiff, whose badge of office was his hat worn in court, rapped loudly and called the room to order.

"Well, Mr. Darby," said the State solicitor, smiling broadly, "go on now and tell the court all that happened after that."

"Well," complied the witness, "Jabe jowered consider'ble when I said that, an' threatened to split my damn head open, but he didn't split that sort of a head nor no other sort open. He went to the gal, though, right off, an' told 'er what I'd said. I know he told 'er, fer she come down to whar I was at work in my peach orchard the next day an' cussed me to my face; she cussed wuss'n any overseer I ever laid eyes on, an' they kin beat the Dutch. She 'lowed her an' Jabe loved one another powerful, an' that they was a-goin' to git married an' live under my roof, whether I was willin' or not.

"I told 'er she'd have a hot time of it when she arrived. Well, she was as good as 'er word. About a week from that day they got hitched an' moved in on me, led to it, I've always believed, by my wife, who always was under Jabe's thumb. I ain't the wuss sort o' man on earth, but I wasn't a-goin' to let nobody set on the back o' my neck an' pull hair the wrong way, so one mornin', about three days after they took charge o' my estate, while they was over at Gid Ware's house on a little social visit to give 'em a' appetite fer my grub, I put all the'r things out at the bars whar they'd be handy to load on a wagon. A little drizzlin' rain blowed up an' wet the things, but not enough to hurt 'em, an' I wasn't responsible fer that. I didn't have charge o' the weather, but it made Jabe as mad as a hornet. He lit into me with a bed-slat an' took all the skin off o' the side o' my face an' come as nigh as peas dislocatin' my jaw; I had it tied up in a rag fer two weeks afterwards. I did my best to hurt 'im, but his wife kept betwixt us except when Jabe could git a swipe at me, an' then she retreated.

"After we had quieted down a little, my wife, who was down at the wash-place, doin' the week's washin' fer 'em, she come in an' said she was ready to hear the testimony. They did all the testifyin'; I wasn't sworn

in. She heard the'r account of how I had lit into 'em an' then rendered 'er verdict. It was agin' me. She was a-goin' to leave me high an' dry, an' live with them. Jabe sentenced me a little furdur; he 'lowed he was a-goin' to burn the roof over my head the fust dry, windy night. Then, after that, I seed Jabe an' Hank Wartrace a-prowlin' about my place after dark. I seed two men jest about the'r sizes nigh the barn the night it was burned. The next day the nigger was a-feared to face the music an' lit out fer safety, but I put the officers on his track an'—well, thar he sets."

Darby's statement was convincing, but in cross-questioning him Mr. Thorn weakened it by making the witness admit that he would not have prosecuted the two prisoners if his stepson had not been the cause of Mrs. Darby's leaving him.

Next the State introduced two or three witnesses to prove that Jabe had made open threats against the old man, but this attempt fell to the ground. They may have come prepared to swear against Jabe Harris, but they would not do it while the eyes of such a fighting character were fixed on them. Then Hank Wartrace was put on the stand and he seemed suddenly emboldened to the course he had decided on by the visible weakness of the State's case. He calmly denied having made a confession and swore he knew nothing of the burning of the barn.

"But, your honor!" protested the State solicitor, shaking his finger in the black, shrinking face, "I can produce witnesses from Atlanta who will testify that this negro did confess, if you will only hold the matter over."

The judge reflected, then took up his pen.

"I can't do that," said he. "You haven't sufficient evidence to justify it. I'll throw the case out."

It was a triumph for Jabe and his sympathizers. The courtroom was now astir and friends pressed forward with extended hands and warm congratulations. Neighbors now eager to show their withheld loyalty formed a group

around the family as they went out to Gid Ware's wagon. Ware produced a pint of whisky and in honor of the occasion drank with Jabe from the neck of the flask. Hank Wartrace, now at liberty, with two or three colored men, was seen at the well taking a drink of water.

Old Ike Darby came from the courthouse alone. Even the faint light of prospective revenge had died out of his face, leaving it more sallow-looking than ever. Mrs. Darby saw him as she got into Ware's wagon, and now that her offspring was out of danger, she was conscious of an unexpected commotion in her breast due to that view of her husband's face. Mrs. Ware was an observant woman, and her eyes followed Ike as he went out to the hitching-rack and mounted his little mule.

"Somehow I'm sort o' sorry fer 'im," she said in Mrs. Darby's ear. "The truth is, I never, fer one, had anything agin' 'im. He always treated me like a lady. I reckon about his biggest fault is his bull-headed way o' standin' up fer what he considers his rights. That's made folks not like 'im. But I wouldn't give a hill o' beans fer a man that will be run over. Folks as old as he is, an' as set in the'r habits don't have much patience with right young people, nuther, an' Jabe an' Annie ain't his own flesh an' blood. That makes a sight o' difference."

These kindly words rang in Mrs. Darby's ears during the drive home. Once or twice she stole a glance behind her and saw Ike jogging along on his mule, his legs swinging back and forth. She almost wished Mrs. Ware had not spoken in his behalf; the words had awakened emotions that she had thought dead and buried under the sod of her wrongs. She could not enter into the merriment of Jabe and Annie as they laughed over different features of the trial. All at once she began to view her daughter-in-law in a new light. She could not see how any human being could laugh at a man so infinitely helpless and isolated as Ike Darby. If she had been alone, she would have waited on the roadside for him to come up, but

the wagon, like the grim fate which had borne her along of late, was relentless in its progress. She saw him outlined against the background of green fields for another instant and then he was lost to her sight.

It was noon when they reached home, and Jabe and Annie made the Wares stay to dinner. Mrs. Darby was tired as only a great strain on the emotions tires one, but she was expected to prepare the meal and she did it. It was dusk before the visitors thought of leaving. Mrs. Darby was at the wood-pile picking up chips with which to start a fire to prepare supper on when Mrs. Ware came out to say good-by.

"Look y' here," she said, with a frown, "I hope you don't do all the drudgery about this place. My Lord, my eyes has been opened to-day. Somebody told me Jabe had fetched you over here so his strong young wife could do fer you, but ef I've had a sample o' her doin's to-day, she's about as triflin' as they make 'em."

"I don't mind it," answered the other woman, plaintively. "I had work to do at the other place, an'—"

"I don't want to hurt yore feelin's," broke in Mrs. Ware, with blazing eyes, "but you are about the most foolish person I've run across in a good while. That boy has tuck you from a comfortable home an' a man as good as the general run—they are all faulty—an' is makin' a downright slave o' you to gratify his spite."

"I'm tired o' fusses," sighed the wan-faced woman, as she put another handful of chips into her apron, "an' thar'd be another big one ef I don't suit Jabe. Sometimes I don't see no use o' livin', nohow, as shore as you please one person you don't another. I never was as lonely in my life. Jabe an' Annie has a purty good time, but they don't cheer me up one bit, not one bit."

That night, after supper, the little family sat out in front of the cabin under the apple trees. Jabe and his wife were still aglow with their signal triumph and could think of nothing else. While they talked Mrs. Darby noticed something that escaped their eyes. It

was a spark of fire gleaming as steadily as a red star across the meadow that intervened between them and her former home.

It was old Darby's pipe. When in trouble it had always been his habit to sit and smoke in the doorway. Poor old man! her heart cried out. Of course he had acted badly in bringing such an unfeeling and public charge against her son, but he was old and Jabe was young, strong, and now triumphant. She pictured old Ike preparing his simple meals, and this thrust a shaft through her heart that was worse than physical pain, for in such things there had never been a more awkward man, and she had heard him say hundreds of times that her cooking had been a delight to him ever since their marriage.

To keep from seeing the fire of his pipe she retired to her room. In about half an hour Jabe and Annie entered their apartment and began to undress. Just then there was a clatter outside and a wagon drove up to the gate. It was Gideon Ware's.

"Hello, Jabe," Ware called out, cautiously, "come to the gate. I want to see you."

Jabe went to the door and stood peering out in the night, vastly surprised over the unexpected visit. "I cayn't; I'm barefooted," he said; "ef you'll——"

"Hell! Thar ain't no time to lose," grunted Ware, and throwing his reins over the gate-post, he came to where Jabe stood. "Pete Wilson's jest from town," he began, excitedly. "He's yore friend to the marrow, an' a slick duck. He says he drapped on to some underhand work that was done after we-uns left town to-day. He says they've put Hank back in jail an' telegraphed fer witnesses to his confession. They've swore out another warrant fer yore arrest an' they may be out to serve it any minute. This time they got you and Hank charged with stealin' the old man's wheat, an' they say they got all the proof they want. You'd better let me put you on the train at Tilton. My advice is fer you to skedaddle."

Jabe stood staring, white in the dim moonlight. His wife had heard all Ware had said, and she, too, was pale.

"He's right," she declared, presently.

"We'd better ketch that train. We mought as well go all the way to Texas an' be done with it; they never will bother us thar. I wonder how they found out about——"

"I hain't got the money," said Jabe, in a tone of despair. "I paid Thorn the last cent I had to git 'im to take my case. I wonder ef mother would let me have the sixty dollars she has saved up?"

Mrs. Darby appeared in the door of her room, which, like the other, opened on the yard. She had heard enough to know that her son was again in peril, but she was unable to understand why.

"What do you want money fer, Jabe?" she faltered, her voice cracking in excitement. "I 'lowed——"

"I've got to git to a place o' safety, mother," he interrupted, doggedly. "They're never goin' to let me rest till they stick it to me."

A light seemed to break on the old woman's understanding, a light that dazed and stunned her. She put her hand on the door facing, but it slid down as if her fingers had no adhesive power.

Ware thought she was going to fall, and stepped toward her, but she crouched on the doorstep, still staring at her son's face.

"Oh, Jabe, Jabe, Jabe!" she cried, "you didn't railly burn the old man's barn, did you? You didn't, shorely you didn't! You kin have the last cent I got; that ain't what I am after; tell me, did you? Did you?"

Silence fell on the group. They were all looking at Jabe. It lay with him to settle the matter, but to tell the truth was a hard thing. Mrs. Harris turned from him impatiently, and looked down the road.

"Tell 'er, an' be done with it," she said. "We've got to have money to git away on. While you are a-standin' thar they may be half-way here."

Jabe drew a long breath, and avoided his mother's fixed gaze.

"I was deviled into it," he admitted, doggedly. "A feller 'll do a lot when a old rascal is eternally a-naggin' of 'im."

Something like a gasp escaped Mrs. Darby's lips. For barely an instant she swept her face with her quivering hands, then she rose.

"I'll git the money," she said. "Hurry, an' git ready. Mr. Ware is right; you must git away." She came back from the darkness of her room with something rolled up in a scrap of cloth. "That's all thar is," she said. "I kin make out somehow; you'll need it. Oh, I hope you won't let 'em ketch you."

Jabe took the money, doggedly muttering his thanks, and his mother retired into the darkness of her room to try to adjust herself to the new situation. She heard her daughter-in-law hurriedly packing a trunk, and the low murmuring of Ware's voice and Jabe's as they conversed at the gate. Fifteen minutes later Jabe put his head in at the door and said, "Good-by, mother; do the best you can."

She ran after him, her hands outstretched. "I want to kiss you, Jabe," she said, in a sobbing tone. "I feel like I'll never lay my eyes on you again in this world."

He came back, and stood like a man of stone while she put her arms around him and kissed him on the brow. Then he tore himself away to join Annie and Ware at the wagon. He helped his wife into the wagon, and then, telling them to wait, he surprised them by returning to the lone woman in the yard.

"Mother," he said, "I'm goin' to do better out thar. I've had enough devilment to do me the rest o' my life. I'm a-goin' to do better, ef they'll not foller me an' bring me back."

She tried to speak out her joy over this unexpected resolution, but her voice hung in her throat.

He hurried to the wagon, climbed in, and it rolled away.

When its sound had died out on the still night Mrs. Darby went back to her room and sat on the bed. But she did not stay there. The little room seemed full of reminders of her loneli-

ness. She stood in the rear doorway and looked across the meadow. The moon had gone down, but the sky was full of faint, calm stars. Suddenly she noticed the gleam of Ike's pipe again. It glowed like a promise of protection. She acted on an impulse, and gathering up her skirt she went resolutely through the dewy grass and weeds toward her old home.

When she was quite near the house old Darby suddenly sprang up. His voice rang out sharp, clear and authoritative.

"Halt, thar!" he ordered. "I don't know who you are, nor what yore business is, but I ain't a-goin' to run no risks in a neighborhood whar a citizen's rights ain't better protected'n mine is. Halt an' speak up or I'll step inside an' git my gun."

"It's me, Ike," the woman cried out. "It's jest me!"

He advanced a few steps and paused. "Well," he said, sullenly, "what do you want this time o' night?"

She climbed over the rail fence and came to him.

"Jabe an' Annie's gone off an' left me," she said. "I'm alone now, Ike. I reckon I'm about the loneliest creature you ever seed. Jabe told me he burned the barn, an' I've come back to beg yore pardon an' ax you to let me live with you again. Gid Ware come an' warned 'em. They are off fer good. Oh, Ike, I'm so miserable! I never knowed till to-night how good a man you'd been to me, nor how much trouble my boy had fetched on you. If you'll take me back I'll make as good a wife as I know how. Oh, Ike, do be forgivin'?"

He did not look at her. He knocked the glowing ashes from his pipe against the corner of the house and blew through the stem. Then came his answer.

She had never heard him speak so softly—so gently. It was as if he were trying to keep down within him a veritable storm of tenderness and joy.

"God Almighty knows I never could close my door agin you, Mandy," he said. "I knowed all along that you'd

a-done yore part right ef you hadn't been influenced by that boy. Ef he'll stay away me'n' you'll end our days in peace an' comfort. My lawyer told me 'fore we left court that he was goin' to try to git fresh witnesses, on another charge, but I'm glad Jabe's gone. They'll never foller 'im when I ax 'em

to drop the case. They'll let Hank off, too."

Then he looked down at her wet skirt and damp feet, and said, even more tenderly: "Get in the house an' take off that damp dress an' them wet shoes; you'll catch yore death o' cold, an' then what ud we do?"



A WINTER MEETING

IS this the girl who scrambled down
The rocky clefts and ledges?
Who waded in the shallows brown
And vaulted o'er the hedges?

Is this the hoyden, with a rake,
Tossing the fragrant billows?
Or poised where swaying hay loads make
The pleasantest of pillows?

Is this the maid who milked at eve,
The art with ardor learning?
And, later, turning up her sleeve,
Lent hand to speed the churning?

Is this the—— Yes, indeed, 'tis she!
This beauty, bored and weary,
Who turns her eyeglass full on me
With fixed, if listless, query.

The while, in swallow-tail, at ease,
I stand (at least, I try to),
Matching her look that seeks to freeze—
An eyeglass at my eye, too.

Perchance, she thinks, "Who is this man,
Glum as an owl, or glummer?
Never the youth I rode and ran
And romped with, all last summer!"

MADLINE BRIDGES.

CASTLE AND COTTAGE

By Harold MacGrath

Author of "The Puppet Crown," "Arms and the Woman," Etc.

THERE is a castle on a great highway,
A princely castle, lone and large and gray.

Fair fountains make them merry in the sun,
And joyous brooks swift through the hedges run.

The peacock struts among the blooming flowers,
And many a Pan in tinted marble glowers.

Within the castle there are velvet floors,
Wide corridors and noiseless, swinging doors.

On ceilings Venuses and milky doves
Join in the frolics of the dimpled loves.

But, ah, o'er all this castle seems to dwell
The spirit of some sad and lonely spell.

No happy laughter wakes the echoes here:
The chill of pomp and wealth gives forth no cheer.

From here 'tis Fashion issues her decree:
Love to this castle has not found a key.

Now in the dell, below the castle lands,
A little, white-washed, vine-clad cottage stands.

Here in the garden rose-cheeked children play;
You hear their songs all through the bright, long day.

The father plows apart the willing soil;
His face is brown, his hands are hard from toil.

And to the oxen as they plod along
The toil seems lighter for the plowman's song.

Within the cottage there the housewife plies
Her tasks with swelling heart and shining eyes.

She listens to the children's happy choir,
And smiling thinks of him who is their sire.

God's eye must dwell upon this humble thatch,
Where Love to enter lifts not any latch.

So there they stand, the castle passing fair,
The cottage with its floors all worn and bare.

Riches are naught: the fare, however thin,
Is honey in the cottage Love dwells in.

A STOLEN AFTERNOON

By Ethel Sigsbee Small

MRS. CHESTER found a seat on a great sun-baked rock, and I dropped down on the grass below her. One foot, dangling a scant inch from the water, afforded me a glimpse of the reflection of a pretty ankle. I decided to stay where I was, and made myself comfortable. Away off in the woods somewhere a bird, with a strange, musical cry, was trilling out its call, and, nearer us, another answered. The air was sweet with June flowers; the brook babbled dreamily; it was a delightful spot. Mrs. Chester echoed my thoughts aloud.

"This might be the Garden of Eden," she said, in a hushed voice.

"And I Adam?" I thought of saying, but it sounded silly. Besides, I felt lazy.

I tossed a pebble at a turtle on a stone nearby; then regretted it, as his plunge spoiled the reflection in the water. Mrs. Chester peered over the rock at me.

"Are you dead, Jack?" she inquired, severely.

"Yes, to all but you," I answered, loverlike.

"Because, if you aren't," she went on, "there is no excuse for this silence. Even admitting you were sleeping, won't help you any, for it isn't proper to sleep when one is on a picnic."

"Isn't it?" I asked, lazily. "Why isn't it? Who says it isn't? I'd like to know who it is that determines we shall do thus and so, anyway. Whoever it is, certainly made a bad job of it. Now, take sleeping on an occasion of this sort, for instance; what could be more delightful, with that little brook for a lullaby, and the bird-calls, and you, like a guardian angel, bending over me? It's an outrageous shame whoever made it out as not the proper thing!"

"If one likes a thing, I should think one would want to stay awake to enjoy it," returned Mrs. Chester, unconvinced. "If you sleep, what becomes of the brook and the birds and the guardian angel? All gone—vanished!" And here she snapped her fingers. "Besides, you can't see me from there. How do you know I am bending over you, or what I'm doing? I may be making faces at you. I'd like to," she added, mischievously.

"That is a thing I allow no one to do," I answered, gravely, "and there is a penalty incurred if the offense is offered. It is rather a nice penalty, however," I added, musingly, after a moment. "Some girls think so. No doubt you would, too."

"Oh, I am sure I shouldn't," replied Mrs. Chester, with alacrity. "I hate penalties, and I haven't made a single face—as yet," she added, darkly.

She took off her hat. It was a rural affair, made for just such an occasion, with streamers. She swung it by these, and looked down at me most invitingly. Mrs. Chester has yellow hair, brown eyes, and very pink cheeks. Also, her teeth are white; her mouth is red, and there is always a dimple lurking around it.

"Let me see you make one," I asked, abruptly.

"What?" asked Mrs. Chester's very arched brows.

"A face—whatever that is," I explained. "I long for the sight of one."

"I'll call it *moue*, if you like; that's what they always say in the Duchess' novels," said Mrs. Chester. It seemed to me we were wandering.

"Show me one," I pleaded.

"There goes a turtle, Jack," said Mrs. Chester.

"There is not a single bond of sympathy between that turtle and me," I replied, not taking my eyes from her face for a moment. "It proved itself a creature without principle by playing me a mean trick a moment ago, which is another reason why I'll have nothing to do with it. Will you, or will you not, make a *moue* for me?"

"You are hurting my hand," said Mrs. Chester. "I wear, as you see, a ring with five diamonds, set crosswise, on my right hand. Even a very slight squeeze is painful," and she gave me the other.

I got up on the rock beside her. All sorts of things were disturbing the water, so there seemed no use in sitting longer on the grass.

Mrs. Chester gazed pensively out into the rippling coolness of the little brook for some moments. Then she gave a little jump that startled me.

"Do you know what I'd love more than anything to do?" she asked, eagerly.

"No," I said; "but I know what I should."

"Go in wading," went on Mrs. Chester, who rarely, it may have been observed, paid any attention to my remarks, which was rather a pity, as some of them were really very neat.

"Then do it!" I was all enthusiasm.

Mrs. Chester's cheeks flushed, and her eyes sparkled—brown sparkles, like the water in the muddy end of the brook, where it tumbled over the pebbles.

"But, wouldn't it be wrong—a married woman?" she murmured.

"Not so very married," I said, comfortingly; "only a year, isn't it?"

"If some one should pass!"

"This is the Garden of Eden," I said, positively. "There is no one to pass."

"There is Adam," she said, blushing. I thought that sweet of her.

"He is very broad-minded," I said, gallantly, "and he will never, never tell."

"Then I'll do it!" she cried, with a little crow of happiness. In a twinkling, her shoes and two filmy stockings were decorating the greensward.

I don't know how she did it. It was magical. I felt as if I had wit-

ressed some conjuror's trick. But, then, everything about Mrs. Chester is infested with magic. She is six parts fairy, and three parts child; only one part is grown-up woman, I fear.

"I'm so afraid some one will see me," she cried, in an agony of fear, drawing her feet under her skirts. But presently she grew more bold, and a small, white something dipped down into the water. It might have been a spray of dogwood; it may have been a little silver fish, or possibly a pale, pink rose, but it did not seem possible it could be a foot. I told her this. It seemed a shame to keep it to myself. I think really good things at times.

"Oh," cried Mrs. Chester, drawing up her foot, "it is c-c-cold, and I think a snake has bitten me!"

Reassured, however, by my swearing there were no serpents in this Eden, she gathered up her skirts, and stood in the ripples, the sunlight filtering through the leaves upon her little yellow head and sparkling on the pebbles at her feet. I snapped with my camera, when her head was turned, what I thought a very pretty picture.

"How is it?" I called out to her.

She shrugged her shoulders.

"Not quite as nice as the anticipation," she sighed. "It is cold, and there are such quantities of little spiky pebbles. I think I'll come out. A turtle might come, or a fish," and the very thought of such a calamity sent her scrambling up beside me.

"Well, are you perfectly happy, now your wish is granted?" I asked, drying her feet on my pocket-handkerchief, and taking as long as possible about it. "Not many get their longings satisfied so easily."

"Yes," said Mrs. Chester, "it really was lovely, now I think of it, if there had only been fewer pebbles and wiggly things in the water. Yes, I'm happy, and very hungry. Can't we have something to eat, Jack?"

I got out our box of luncheon, and, though it did not take me more than half a minute, and I can swear Mrs. Chester did not move during that interval, when I came up to her she had resumed her

shoes and stockings, and was, as she expressed it, in her right mind again.

"Aren't we dreadfully wicked?" she laughed, as I spread out our dainty feast, using the rock for a table.

"But we are so horribly good at other times," I suggested.

"And, after all, there is nothing very terrible in stealing an afternoon all for ourselves. It may not happen again in ever so long," said she.

I looked my disapproval of this.

"Well, for a little while," said Mrs. Chester, relenting.

Mrs. Chester enjoyed the picnic with the keen appetite of a child. She stained her lips and finger-tips a deeper pink with berries, and spilled crumbs with childish abandon.

"What a baby!" I said, reprovingly, as I helped her brush the crumbs from the front of her stiff shirtwaist.

"And all the bread and cheese she got, she put upon the shelf," misquoted my companion, naughtily. And then we both laughed. It is easy to laugh when one is picnicking with Mrs. Chester.

The sun was low when luncheon was finished, and queer shadows were lengthening in the wood. Brownies and hobgoblins peeped from bush and tree. I could not see them, but Mrs. Chester assured me they were there, and no one should dispute the word of one six parts fairy. The birds chirped sleepily to one another. Above us, in the leafy denseness of an oak, a mother-bird was calling her little ones to bed. Mrs. Chester grew silent and I pensive, for we realized our afternoon had reached its end.

"We must go back, Jack," said Mrs. Chester, softly.

The gathering shadows lent an eerie beauty to her face, as she sat gazing, large-eyed, into the distance. Mrs. Chester merry, is a sight to set the coldest heart a-tingling, but Mrs. Chester pensive, no man could resist. I did not try.

I put my arm about her neck and tilted back her head until it reached my

shoulder. Then I looked, for a few seconds, into the brown depths of her eyes—and then I kissed her.

It was easy to believe we were really alone in Eden; that there was no one on earth save us two. Was it true a busy city lay but a short half hour's walk from here?

Whether Mrs. Chester shared my thoughts or not, at least she drew closer, and slid a little, confiding hand in mine; then she tilted back her head of her own accord, and I felt on my cheek the brush of a butterfly's wing.

I believe I have neglected to state that I am Mrs. Chester's husband, and, have felt the butterfly kisses more than once, but they have never ceased to stir me.

"We must go, little boy," she whispered, wishfully.

I grew reckless.

"Why not stay?" I whispered, close to her ear. "You are a fairy, and this is your home. I am only a common mortal, it is true, but you can change me into anything you wish. I will be an elf at your command, or a brownie, or one of those little dancing-light things—what do you call them?"

"A will-o'-the-wisp, I suppose you mean, little boy-child," said Mrs. Chester, "and that is all very pretty, but"—and she looked very reproachful—"what about John Edward?"

I confess I had forgotten John Edward's existence; but, then, there is so little of him to remember. I did not say this, however. I have learned tact in referring to John Edward, from stern experience.

"I suppose we couldn't turn him into a baby brownie, or anything of that sort?" I suggested, weakly.

"No," said Mrs. Chester, gently but firmly; "he might take cold." She rose, and held out a hand to me. "Come, let us go to him. We have stolen away from him for a whole afternoon. We will go and crave his pardon."

The moon came up to peep at us as, hand in hand, we strolled back through the woods.

WHOM BESSIE JAFFRY MADE

By Lucia Chamberlain

I.

"THEN there's Aglaea—she's the real problem this winter." Mrs. Pendinning anxiously surveyed the face of her *vis-à-vis*, as if she expected to find there the solution of her difficulty.

Mrs. Jaffry, whose business it was to find solutions to other people's difficulties, was instantly solicitous.

"But, dear girl, social successes are made, not born. What's wrong? She's good stuff."

Mrs. Pendinning's hands were lifted in protestation. "Bessy, she is the best-tempered, most obedient child! She has never given me a moment's anxiety in her life until now. Now I wish she had! She has no individuality!"

"Really," mused Mrs. Jaffry, "I should have said she had a good deal."

"Oh, my dear Bessy, I don't mean the child is without character. But it's so—so indefinite! If she would only do something original, I could forgive its being quite original. But she won't. Aglaea's so hopelessly dependent!"

"Nonsense, Martha! It's horribly conventional to be original. Besides, she has the points of a beauty."

"Yes, she has possibilities, but they will never be anything else. She just misses being a beauty, but the miss is so very apparent. The other girls were all so distinctive!" Mrs. Pendinning turned her eyes from the unpleasant future to agreeable recollection. "There was Josie—the dear child was positively plain, but there was something so entirely definite, and at the same time so disquieting—you know!"

Mrs. Jaffry knew. Josie's belledom had run hers a close second, and died hard.

"Whereas, Aglaea—er—has one of the sweetest frocks I have seen this season."

This astonishing sentence was punctuated by the slam of a door, and Mrs. Jaffry, looking up, perceived that Aglaea had entered the room.

Immediately she appeared to fill it. Aglaea was very tall, and slim almost to thinness. Her sleeves were rolled up, her golf waistcoat unbuttoned, her brassie threatened every vase and bronze in the little Greuze reception-room. She charged her mother like a young colt.

"Mamma, can't I—papa said to ask you if I might go down to Palo Alto—to the paddock—to see Carter's 'Firefly' broken! I must be ready in ten minutes! Oh, please!"

Mrs. Pendinning had begun with a gasp. Now she shuddered. "My dear Aglaea, certainly not! How can you ask such a thing? You have a frock to be fitted! And speak to Mrs. Jaffry at once. You must have lost your wits!"

Bessy Jaffry both smiled and frowned as she held the girl's hand and looked into the reserved and diffident face. Aglaea shook hands like a shy boy. She blushed uncomfortably before the scrutiny of the keen gray eyes under the Virot hat. The Jaffry eye was a veritable X-ray for penetration. It divined in a moment what had eluded the Pendinning sensibility for twenty years. Aglaea's eyes were just not striking. Her hair would have been stunning with a dash of red in it. Bessy found herself wondering why the girl was not a beauty.

Again Aglaea turned to her mother, this time without enthusiasm. "Mamma, can't I go? We will be back in time for dinner."

"To the—er—paddock?"—Mrs. Pen-

denning's notion of paddocks was hazy—"with a lot of grooms and jockeys? I should think you would have more sense!"

The girl was scarlet. "But papa will be there."

"The colonel sees nothing but horses. I consider such goings-on most unlady-like. You would better dress for luncheon."

Bessy Jaffry followed Aglaea's departing figure with interested eyes. Could Mrs. Pendenning hope to succeed where three select finishing schools had failed? But Mrs. Jaffry considered finishing schools beneath her contempt. She had diagnosed the trouble at the first glance, and before the portière had ceased to swing she had decided on the remedy.

Mrs. Pendenning turned to her with eloquent gesticulation of hands. They said: "You see—it is hopeless!"

Mrs. Jaffry merely smiled. "I didn't know Aglaea was interested in the turf," she vouchsafed. "You could use that to advantage."

"Oh, she's not horsy," said Mrs. Pendenning, hastily. The turf was her abomination. "But she is very fond of horses. Sometimes I fear she goes about too much with the colonel. Why, he actually wanted to take her to the races with him!"

"Why not?" said Bessy Jaffry.

"Mercy, an unformed girl like Aglaea!"

"Exactly. It would help to form her," declared Mrs. Jaffry, with a twinkle in her eye. "My dear Martha, you don't suppose that keeping the child tagged to your petticoats, and filling her up with admonitions, is going to form her. She's got to be thrown in, and learn to swim alone. What she needs"—Mrs. Jaffry brought an impressive little fist down on the arm of her chair—"all she needs, is a clever man!"

"What!"

"M'm," nodded Mrs. Jaffry, "a clever man could do it."

"Bessy, what *do* you mean?"

"Just this—and there's no need of looking so shocked. No girl can be a social success until at least one man has

loved her desperately. The richer, better known and more popular he is the better for her. It gives her poise, confidence in herself, and improves her looks. Now, Aglaea is an aggravated case of arrested social success. She could be beautiful; she might be fascinating. Given the right man, she would be both. Furthermore, Martha, I have saved you the trouble of selecting the man."

"Bessy!"

"It's Barry More."

"Bessy!"

"Why not? He's just the thing."

"But, but"—argued Mrs. Pendenning, feebly—"Mr. More is so very—er—popular, so very much sought after! And Aglaea, you know, is *not* attractive to men."

"Barry More," said Mrs. Jaffry, oracularly, "has been out ten seasons, and is *blasé*. I selected him because he falls in love easily, and makes love inspiringly. I know, Martha, because, ten years ago he made love to me. Furthermore, Barry is always looking for a new sensation. . . . If he had seen Aglaea as she came into the room this morning, he would have had one. I did. I intend that he shall see her at such a moment."

"But, Bessy—he hasn't a penny!"

"Heavens! Barry isn't the marrying brand. I didn't mean that."

"But you don't consider the possibility of the child's feelings becoming seriously involved."

"No one falls permanently in love with Barry. And I must warn you not to underestimate Aglaea. She is not nearly such a fool as I was at her age, and my case lasted only three months."

Bessy Jaffry took her French boots from the ottoman, settled her cream-colored hat on her fluffy red hair, and prepared to depart. Mrs. Pendenning followed her out on the piazza, into the bright September afternoon.

"Well," said the younger lady, "this is good-by San Rafael. Next week we shall be in town again."

"Do you know," Mrs. Pendenning confided, "I rather dread the winter."

Mrs. Jaffry laughed. "Don't," she

said, halfway down the steps, "don't. It's going to be a great success. All we need is a clever man." The Virot hat nodded decidedly. "A clever man," she repeated.

Then the high cart whirled her away.

II.

It was not Bessy Jaffry's fault that her remedy failed at the first application. It was applied at the wrong moment. Barry More's presence at Aglaea's coming-out had been inevitable—his introduction to her blank mischance. Two attempts in this direction on the part of well-meaning people Bessy had frustrated with a crook of her finger, or a wave of her fan. But, at the moment when a look would have saved the situation, Billy Hawes put a snapper on the end of his rambling story that startled her out of five years of boredom. Even then, had it not been for the *contretemps* of the salad applied to the front of her lace gown, she might have saved the day. But when she looked over her shoulder a second later she saw her unconscious spouse leading Barry around a circle of pink and white *débutantes*, in the center of which Aglaea's brown head and scarlet face were visible a good three inches above the others. Bessy groaned in spirit.

"If only Aglaea hadn't blushed so, he would have forgotten her already," she thought, watching Barry lead away the most kittenish of the group. "But blushing is such a rare art now, I am afraid he won't. Stupid! He's the only safe man in the set, who is entertaining!"

Aglaea carried her scarlet face up to her room that night. She looked subdued. An imprudent mamma had impressed it firmly upon her mind that she had "failed." And her own memory of an evening spent in a wild endeavor to "be natural," with people who seemed to exclude only that from their category of being, bore out her mother's opinion. Of her feelings concerning the coldness of Mr. More she was reticent. Not so Mrs. Pendenning!

Listening to a stream of lamentation, the gist of which was that Aglaea would better hide her diminished light under a bushel basket, Mrs. Jaffry decided that Martha was a bad handicap to her daughter's career. Her verbal comments were brief.

"Don't be a fool, Martha! If I had given up at the first shot I wouldn't be Bessy Jaffry. The girl is abnormal, but she has sense. Let her play golf and tennis as much as she likes—and, for Heaven's sake! don't tell her to 'be natural'. We none of us are; it's out of date."

So Aglaea went meekly to teas and luncheons in the vast shadow of Mrs. Pendenning, and sat against the wall through half the assembly dances, obediently trying to "look animated." But a feeling of subdued unhappiness had settled down over her like a pall, hardly to be shaken off in the brief mornings on the Presidio links, or in the park, riding with the colonel.

Mrs. Pendenning lamented that Aglaea "took no interest in clothes, or dances." Mrs. Jaffry expressed extreme disbelief. She had her theory of girls, and it was a good one. Furthermore, she was watching her chance.

It came the following February, during a brief excursion to Burlingame for a polo match. Mrs. Pendenning never went to Burlingame. She said it was against her principles. Therefore, the surprise of Mrs. Jaffry was great, when, looking out of her window at an unconscionably early hour—she had danced all night, and had not gone to bed yet—she saw Aglaea in the paddock, in the act of mounting a restive, black horse, to whose head was attached a groom. She looked a little farther, and saw the colonel's gray golf cap. Ah! that explained it. Of course, the colonel was down for the polo, and they were stopping at the Carters.

But now the girl was off—hatless in the warm, springlike air. Her red coat flashed, as the black took the first hurdle.

Before he was over, Bessy Jaffry had reached the telephone.

"Thank goodness Barry sat into a game after the dance," she murmured

to herself, devoutly. "He can't have gone to bed yet."

Fifteen minutes later he was on the steps of her veranda. He looked white and disheveled. "Champagne uncorked over night," Bessie decided, looking down from her vantage of the top step.

"You lost," she said, gayly, shaking her head at him.

"Hundred and fifty—couldn't afford it. Bess, it's bad—I'm going to quit—settle down! You needn't laugh. Hullo! Who's the jockey?" He walked to the piazza railing and looked across to the paddock.

Mrs. Jaffry smiled at the toes of her preposterous slippers.

Nine o'clock saw the small club community out on their verandas enjoying the view. This consisted of the colonel, in riding togs, holding a watch on the side—while Barry in evening clothes, and Aglaea, with riding skirt and golf coat, were putting Mrs. Jaffry, in breakfast gown and preposterous slippers, upon the back of the tall, black horse. Later, the four went into the Jaffrys to breakfast, and Burlingame had a chance to talk.

The week following, the *News-Letter* came out with a paragraph that sent Mrs. Pendennig around to the Jaffrys as fast as the seven hills of San Francisco would allow.

"My dear," said the tranquil Bessy, "don't you see that she's made? And you ought to know that the *News-Letter* would make a morning gown a negligée?"

In this case Mrs. Jaffry was the truth. Mrs. Pendennig found a new *régime* beginning in her decorous drawing-rooms. Not that Aglaea was surrounded at the next cotillon—but the dances she had hitherto sat out, she danced with Barry More. He brought a train of friends to call, to whom Mrs. Pendennig applied the adjective "doubtful," and he delighted Aglaea's childish soul with huge cascades of pink roses. Mrs. Pendennig's heart was fearful for her child, but Mrs. Jaffry severely sat on every objection.

"Aglaea's the last girl in the world to

be talked about," she declared, "and she's coming out wonderfully! It's doing Barry no end of good, besides—I didn't know he had any youth to renew, but he seems to have redeemed it from somewhere for the purpose. Now, Martha, you shan't spoil it!"

But even the astute Mrs. Jaffry could not prevent Mrs. Pendennig from "warning" Aglaea. That young person, for the first time in her life, showed signs of rebellion.

"I don't see why you say that, mamma," she objected. "He's jolly fun, and a while ago you were so anxious for some one to do this—this sort of thing! Now you say it's bad form. All the girls do it!"

"Mr. More is—er—hardly a desirable person for you to go about with so extensively. He is, I fear—er—rather fast. I wish you could fancy some of the younger men. And, certainly, you may not ride alone with him in the park!"

"But with a groom, mamma!"

"Nonsense! As if a groom made any difference! Now, understand me, Aglaea, I wish you to dance less with Mr. More in the future."

"Yes, mamma," responded the girl, submissively; but Mrs. Pendennig might have detected a note of danger in that very acquiescence, of which the girl herself was unconscious.

Bessy was watching her little drama like a cat. Aglaea's development was remarkable. Furthermore, she had a premonition that the *dénouement* would be original.

"If Martha doesn't make her fall in love with Barry by objecting to him, my name and Aglaea's are made at once," she determined.

May brought the pony races; and straight the house Pendennig was rent in twain. For two weeks the colonel had been looking forward to showing his daughter "a gentleman's race," in which his Kentucky soul delighted. Mrs. Pendennig's strenuous objections had given way before the united attacks of the two, and Aglaea was safe in the knowledge that the parental eye could

never count the dances that Barry had marked as his own. Then a telegram from Truckee snatched the colonel from the midst of the happy scheme, and hurled him on the evening north-bound limited.

The last words his daughter heard were shouted from the window as the train pulled out. "Never mind, Aggie. Carter's glad to have you, just the same. Have a good time!"

Alas! Captain Carter and Colonel Pendenning were old army mates, but the bond of friendship did not extend to the ladies of the respective families. Mrs. Jack Carter was gay, good-hearted, and fond of *risqué* stories. Mrs. Pendenning pronounced her "fast." And it was Mrs. Pendenning who answered the telephone when cordial Mrs. Jack rang up, hoping Colonel Pendenning's unfortunate detention would not also detain his daughter. Aglaea heard the tail end of her mother's refusal as she rushed into the hall.

"No, I couldn't think of it, *dear Mrs. Carter!*" Mrs. Pendenning's voice would have frozen a live coal. "*Too* great an imposition on your generosity! So sweet of you! *Good-by!*" And, without giving the other end time to answer, she hung up the receiver.

Aglaea's face was flushed—but not from diffidence. "Mamma, you haven't!"

"I have refused to let you go to the Carters, certainly," replied mamma, with dignity. "Mrs. Carter is a woman of whom I do not approve—fast and vulgar! I objected to Colonel Pendenning's taking you, in the first place, but without him I certainly will not allow it."

"But we have accepted, and every one is going!" Aglaea was but a child, and the sea of her misfortunes was closing over her head.

"Now, that will do!" declared Mrs. Pendenning.

Aglaea's lips were rebels. "At least, mamma, you might have been polite to her!"

"Aglaea, I never saw you in a temper before! You grieve me!" (*Annoy* was the fitter word, but Mrs. Pendenning

eschewed it as trivial). "Now, we will talk no more of this matter. I shall want you to go downtown with me shortly."

To her surprise, Aglaea made no answer. Her, "Yes, mamma," had come mechanically to her mother's statements for a dozen years. Mrs. Pendenning was distinctly annoyed.

Aglaea shut the door of her room, and contemplated the array on the bed. They had arrived that morning in various boxes from the tailor's and hatter's, and each article had been tried on and triumphantly acclaimed. She had not realized how much she wanted to go to the races, or how much she had wanted Barry More to see her new hat. Aglaea was not emotional, but she suffered the more for that. She had taught her father's gray "Petrel" the hardest jump he knew! And every one but her, would see him take the wall and ditch! Oh! it was too much. She wanted so to see him win; and she supposed that Barry would dance with that cat, the Ketchum girl!

Then she heard his familiar double ring, a long and a short, and, safe in the knowledge that mamma was well into her nap, she ran downstairs.

III.

Mrs. Pendenning overslept the following morning. She had had a trying set-to the night before with the reports of the Centennial Club.

The clock registered the hour of nine before she was behind the coffee-urn. Aglaea was late—but Aglaea was always late! Mrs. Pendenning was about to send Marie to hurry her up, when the front door closed with a hearty slam, and the colonel, preceded several yards by his cheerful voice, blew into the breakfast-room.

"Why, Colonel Pendenning, I didn't expect you till to-morrow!"

"I know, Martha, I know! But I moved heaven and earth and the lumber deal to get back in time for the races. Aggie went down last night, didn't she?"

Mrs. Pendenning then explained why Aglaea had not gone down the night before.

"Poppycock!" declared the colonel. "Martha, you're a wayback! The idea of making Aggie stay home on that account! Well, call her down, call her down! If we're not off on the ten we'll miss the whole show!"

Mrs. Pendenning sighed, seeing her plan defeated, and Marie was dispatched upstairs. She returned presently, saying that Miss Aglaea was not in her room.

"Out for a walk!" commented the colonel. "Well, hunt her up. We haven't a minute!"

Marie lingered, twisting her fingers in her apron. "If you please, Mrs. Pendenning," she began, "Miss Aglaea's bed is made."

The colonel looked mystified. Not so his lady. She rose, slightly pale, and went hastily upstairs. A moment later an exclamation in the nature of a scream made him desert his coveted coffee for his daughter's bedroom. At the threshold he came to an abrupt halt. Mrs. Pendenning, in a state of acute hysteria, occupied the middle of the bed. A crumpled piece of note-paper occupied the middle of the floor.

"Hell!" said the colonel. He emptied the contents of the tooth-mug over his spouse, picked up the crumpled paper and smoothed it out. It resolved itself into a note. He read:

"Dear Mamma: I have eloped with Barry More. Do not try to follow us. Your affectionate daughter,
AGLAEA.

"P. S.—I have taken papa's latchkeys."

The colonel read it twice. "Well, I'm damned!" he said. He looked at his wife, whose hysterics had dissolved into tears. "Martha, what does this mean?"

"It's such a blow, such a blow!" sobbed Mrs. Pendenning from the pillow. "I feared the heart was involved, but I never thought of this, never!" She ended in a muffled wail.

"I never thought she cared a button for him!" The colonel stared.

"Oh, men don't notice these things!

But I saw it growing, and I drove her to this, my poor child!"

"You what?"—sharply. "Not letting her go to Monterey? Oh, poppycock! Aggie's no fool. She wouldn't run off on that account. But I thought she had more sense than to marry a man without a picayune!"

Mrs. Pendenning wept afresh at the thought.

"Now, Martha, stop that fuss! I've got to telegraph Los Angeles, Santa Barbara, and Portland. I'll inquire at the ferry on my way. They must have taken the late train!"

He rushed downstairs and seized his overcoat from the rack, leaving Marie to administer restoratives.

Mrs. Pendenning wept from force of habit. In reality, she was stunned. It seemed to her that this singularly self-reliant note must have been written by some one other than Aglaea, who had never lifted a dissenting voice in all her twenty years. And in spite of the familiar scrawl, she had visions of plots—chloroform, and cabs—the clever schemes of the nefarious Barry More. In defiance of these stood up that curt note that seemed to shake the foundations of Mrs. Pendenning's universe.

Noon brought the colonel with no news.

"Of course," he argued, "anticipating all this fuss, they may have run off to Kokamunga, or Milpitas—the rascals! More's a sharp chap! If he had any a red I wouldn't kick about Aggie's choice."

"Colonel Pendenning, how you talk! The man's a drunken brute!"

"Stuff, Martha. He'll be as decent to the girl as most, and a sight better than many!" The colonel, who had lunched *au buffet* in his overcoat, now departed on a cable car in search of a private detective, with his wife's last words in his ears.

"Colonel Pendenning, the papers must not get hold of it!"

To Mrs. Pendenning, who had prided herself on a closet empty of skeletons, in a city where skeletons are drawing-room bric-à-brac, the threatening pub-

licity, what Mrs. Grundy would say, the condolences of all the nobodies, the garbled accounts of the *News-Letter* and the *Wasp*, were wormwood. And Bessy Jaffry was in Monterey! There was no sympathetic ear into which to pour her woes, so Mrs. Pendenning poured them into the sofa cushions.

Evening brought a disgusted colonel, who had sent and received many fruitless telegrams. He was disposed to take a new view of the situation.

"What's the use," he demanded, over the coffee, of the martyred Mrs. Pendenning, "of rushing round and raising a dust? Those children are married by now——"

"I should *hope* so, Colonel Pendenning!"

"Well, and what's the use? They'll come back when they get ready, and we'll come to an understanding then."

"But the wretch may never bring her back!"

The colonel laughed for the first time in twenty-four hours. "Come, Martha, I know Barry better than that! You're tired. Go to bed, and get some rest! We'll probably hear in the morning!"

But half consoled, Mrs. Pendenning wandered all night through fearful dreams, in which endless couples of Aglaeas and Barry Mores eloped countless times. She awoke not a little refreshed, in spite of her visions.

The mail, awaiting her on the breakfast table, she scanned hastily, but the hoped-for letter was absent. And to-day every one would be coming home, and the whole thing would be out!

"Come, cheer up, Martha," advised the colonel, whose spirits had risen with the rise of M. O. P. "I don't like the business any more than you do, but a long face won't make it any better!"

"It has been a terrible shock!" announced Mrs. Pendenning. She had arrived by stages at the platform of pious resignation. "Any one but Aglaea! Josie would have been quite capable of it; but Aglaea is a dreadful surprise!"

At this moment the door opened, and Aglaea entered the room.

Mrs. Pendenning screamed; the colonel dropped his coffee cup.

"Good-morning, mamma; good-morning, papa," said Aglaea.

She wore a breakfast gown and an air of self-conscious expectation. Mrs. Pendenning was speechless. The colonel coughed. He was puzzled.

"Now, my dear girl, let's have it. Where did you come from?"

"Monterey, papa."

The colonel stared helplessly at the breakfast gown, but Aglaea did not seek to enlighten him. But Mrs. Pendenning, whose mind contained only one idea at a time, found her voice.

"You had the effrontery to go *there*!"

"Where I was invited, mamma," protested Aglaea. Her eyes twinkled.

"The races!" exploded the colonel. "By gad! But about this eloping with More?"

"Yes, I eloped with Barry More," replied the young person, helping herself to grapes.

"Married that man, and went down to the races afterward?" Mrs. Pendenning's voice rose ominously.

"No, mamma, I did *not* marry him," replied Aglaea, quite firmly; "certainly not—he hasn't a cent."

Mrs. Pendenning turned pale. The colonel turned to his daughter.

"My dear Aggie, how's that? This is a devilish mess that I want explained."

Aglaea laughed. "Why, papa, it's perfectly true that I eloped with Barry. You see, I wanted horribly to go to Monterey; but when mamma said no, I somehow never thought I could. But Barry said he saw no obstacle in that"—Mrs. Pendenning glared—"and suddenly, papa, I didn't, either. I saw he was perfectly right! He wanted me to go so very much! So we went. I got up very early in the morning, and met him at the nine train. We got down to Monterey just in time to catch the Carters' coach out to the track. And I spent the night with Mrs. Jack, and went to the dance, and got the last train up in the afternoon. That landed us here at ten-thirty. Get in? I took your latchkeys. I put that in mamma's note."

"But why the devil did you say

'elope'? Your mother and I have had a bad twenty-four hours!"

"Oh, papa, I didn't think—I'm so sorry! But, you see, I knew that if I said I had gone to Monterey to the races, mamma would have come down, and made things very embarrassing for us. And it *was* a sort of an elopement, with the stupid part left out!"

"Good gad!" said the colonel, and exploded with a shout.

"Colonel Pendenning," remarked his bristling spouse, "I think you fail to see the seriousness of the situation!" She turned to Aglaea, frigidly. "You may as well realize that, after the manner in which you have compromised yourself, what you call the 'stupid part' is inevitable."

"I don't see why, mamma. I was with the Carters every minute at the track—no one could help seeing us on top of the coach—and all our crowd went to the ball, and Mrs. Jaffry introduced me to a lot of people, and was so sorry you couldn't come!"

"And how about coming into the city at night, alone, with that—er—man?"

Here the colonel took a hand. "That'll do, Martha. The girl's all right. Mrs. Jack is an A No. 1 chaperon. I don't care what you say. And as for getting home at night, I'll trust More that far, and Aggie a darn sight farther." He exploded, and slapped his knee.

"Gad—elopement, with the stupid part left out! You're your father's own daughter!"

Whereupon Mrs. Pendenning uprose, and swept from the room like avenging justice.

Pretty Bessy Jaffry, blowing in in the afternoon with a cutting from the *Examiner*, headed, "Elopement in High Life," was promptly sucked into the maelstrom of Mrs. Pendenning's woes. The only effect the inside of the story had upon Mrs. Jaffry was to make her hide her head in the couch cushions, and kick her French boots in an abandon of glee.

"Oh, lovely!" she gasped. "The little imp! I saw them both—Aglaea as calm as cream—on Mrs. Jack's coach—and

that night at the ball! She looked ripping, and she never said boh! I supposed, of course, you knew!" The sight of Mrs. Pendenning's face sent her into a fresh spasm.

"Bessy," said Mrs. Pendenning, in a martyr's voice, "I had expected sympathy from you."

"Sympathy, Martha!" The little lady bounded to a sitting posture and seized both her friend's hands. "What do you want sympathy for, when you have success?"

"What?"

"We have arrived! Read this," cried Mrs. Jaffry, waving the *Examiner* cutting in Mrs. Pendenning's averted face.

"But it's not true," faltered the unhappy lady.

"Certainly not. And the colonel will have to contradict it in to-morrow morning's issue—and the *News-Letter* will take it up, and wax enthusiastic—and Aglaea will have such a string of those who also ran, that she can take her pick of any one. She refused Barry at the races—she told me so."

Mrs. Pendenning drew her hand over her forehead. Events were too fast for her.

"But it's such a horrible scandal," she began.

"Scandalous, you mean," corrected Bessy. "That's quite another thing. And Aglaea's done just what you hoped she would, something original—and scandalous! Therefore, she has arrived! You'll see. If you are decorously scandalous you cannot be obscure."

I saw Aglaea at Monte Carlo last summer. She looked radiant, and was flirting desperately with a grand duke. I had heard she was engaged to a title, and supposed this to be it, but I was wrong. It seems, the *fiancé* was in London selecting a proper ring—and Aglaea was trying conclusions with the armed strength of Germany. She passed within three feet of me at the Casino.

And I am inclined to agree with Bessy Jaffry—if you're decorously scandalous you cannot be obscure! Also, that Mrs. Jaffry earned the three thousand that she spent in Egypt.

DE CONVENANCE

By T. W. Hall

SHE was quite prepared. She was a well-groomed, well-educated, well-trained daughter of the elect. She understood her position and her class with all a woman's keen, comprehensive understanding. She was a choice plant that had been nurtured for a purpose. She was a step ahead, an advance in her species; just as, in time, her children would be still another stride onward.

Society was using her for the development of an American aristocracy—an aristocracy that will, in the course of a very few years, become the most dangerous that ever existed. It will be independent, being founded on vast accumulating fortunes. It will be exclusive, having been carefully chosen by years of scientific selection. It will become aristocratic by instinct. It will remain so for self-preservation.

It will be allied to all the other aristocracies of the earth by blood, an alliance that is being formed today more for the benefit of future generations than for the parties most directly interested. It will be a titled aristocracy, although titles are forbidden by our laws. In this case the titles will be family names. They will eventually be quite equivalent to prince, earl, duke, marquis, count, and so on.

Yet it will be democratic, having all the rights of citizens of a democracy. Therefore, it will be the safest of all aristocracies. Asking nothing from the law, it will have nothing to fear from the law. It will not exist in terror of a "Terror." It will not cringe at the threat of a repeal of the law of entail. It will be absolutely independent of state, church and mob. It will exist on

the strongest basis any human scheme can exist—money and brains. Such will be the aristocracy of America.

God save us from the aristocracy of a democracy!

All this she understood. She knew that the society of her day was bending every energy it possessed to the accomplishment of this purpose. She knew equally well that all the other people were helping society to the utmost of their silly ability; that they were blindly forging the chains that would bind the serfs of the future democracy.

She was to play her part in all this. It was quite foreordained, if not by God—well, by her ancestors—for American society already has its ancestors, its customs, and its traditions.

So she was quite prepared. She was already waiting for him to call, and he was not due for five minutes yet. She knew that he had spoken to her father the previous evening, just as she knew that his father had spoken to hers the last time the latter was in San Francisco. Her mother had told her all this, and more, that very morning, with a complacent satisfaction that did not even ask her consent. That went without the saying. He was richer, even, than herself, and of a distinctly coming family, though it had not yet managed to struggle quite so far into the heart of the land of promise as her own. She had even worn the gown and the ornaments that her mother had suggested.

In fact, it was all arranged quite as precisely as one of her mother's own perfect entertainments, which a princess had once acknowledged to be her royal despair. She even won-

dered, in a fit of whimsical musing, if, at the proper time, the ring would not be brought in on a silken cushion by a noiseless, imperturbable, liveried footman. And then she wondered if they were called footmen because in olden times there had also been horsemen. And, if there had been horsemen, she wondered if they came curveting and cantering down the hall at the entrance of a visitor. And then, because she was a woman, (and women are a variable quantity, as well as an unknown one), her mood circled to the other end of the diameter. She frowned and brought her little clinched fist down on the thigh that showed its slender, graceful curves under her tailor-made gown.

"It isn't fair," she muttered. And what she meant was that, while she expected, and was willing to be sacrificed, like all the rest of her kind, for the sake of society, this particular arrangement was not just. No one knew it. No one suspected it. It was her own secret—the only thing, with all her riches, that she could really call absolutely her own. She loved this young man for whom her father had traded her.

The bargain, therefore, was not a fair one, for by it he received, in addition to everything else, the most priceless thing in all the world—a woman's love. Rich as she was, she could not afford to make her love cheap. She could not give it without a return. The only objection she had to marrying this young man of her father's choice was that she loved him.

A noiseless servant, whose actions were a marvelous counterfeit of a well-trained automaton, gravely announced: "Mr. Ganesvoort," and disappeared.

He himself followed springily, smiling and with a cheerful "Good-afternoon, Miss Leonard," precisely as the clock struck the appointed hour.

Her own greeting over, he dropped into the very seat her mother had concluded he would choose, and proceeded precisely as she had expected. The smile died from his lips, and he looked at her very seriously, and

with the faintest suspicion of diffidence. She had not calculated on that last, however. She hoped he would be direct, and have it over as soon as possible. She realized, helplessly now, that she was to be disappointed. Then her mental poise changed again. It circled back to the other end of the diameter, and she thought what an excellent thing it would be for each of the parties to the contract to take a dose of laughing-gas at a proposal *de convenance*.

"I have come to speak to you about a matter which is of the most serious importance to my life, to me—" he began. Then he hesitated, lowered his eyes, blushed visibly, and smoothed his gloves over his knee with all the gentleness with which one strokes the glossy hair of a favorite horse.

"And that is—" she suggested, as encouragingly as seemed proper.

"A matter of perhaps equal importance to you," he continued.

"Yes?" said she, dubiously.

"Do you mean it?" he asked, quickly.

Really, he was more abrupt than she had desired. For a moment she had hoped. But here he had come right to the point at once. Not a particle of preparation, not a protestation of love, not even a reference to it. She was disappointed. But she rose to the occasion. Her self-respect demanded that there be at least an appearance of preliminaries.

"We are both sensible," she hastened to say, realizing, as she said it, that neither of them was. "This is a matter of a lifetime, and happiness is of importance even to us. I know what you would say. You know I know. It is not given to our kind to proceed in any other way."

A look of pain crossed his face.

"Let's not argue that point," she continued. "Let us look at the matter as honestly as we can. I am not a milkmaid, nor a shopgirl. Therefore, you cannot meet me evenings 'Comin' thro' the rye,' nor at the next corner above the shop on the way home after work. Therefore, also, we cannot approach the matter in the usual way, with sheep-eyes and pretty speeches. We are a

house, if you please. Yes, that is precisely the word. A house that is to be built, and the architect has completed his plans. We are about to be put into the hands of the builder. But, before we are, let us look at the plans and specifications, if only for appearances.

"Now, it is to be presumed that you have made up your mind. But I—well, I realize that I am to lose the most precious experience in the life of a woman—the joy of being wooed. Nevertheless, I have some minor rights to which I naturally wish to cling. And, first, I wish to know this: Have you ever loved a woman? Is there a woman who has any claim on your heart now?"

"I have loved—I do love," he answered, looking her honestly in the eye, "wholly, completely, with all my heart."

She gave a little gasp, and felt a sharp pain at her heart.

"She is——" he was about to add.

"No, not her name," she broke in, hurriedly. "I have the right to be spared that. But I would like to know as much of the affair as you care to tell me. Perhaps it will help later. At any rate, it will put us on a fairer footing."

"I have nothing to conceal," he proceeded. "Indeed, I am proud of it," he continued, with a smile, quite ignorant of the growing weight that was crushing her heart. "I saw her first when I came to New York a year ago. It was a face-in-the-crowd-affair, you know, only I was destined to meet her afterward. They say one seldom does. It was at the opera. But I was alone. I had not then been presented to any great extent, and there was no one to tell me who she was. The next time I saw her at church. It was on the following Sunday. It seemed like a good omen. I concluded that we were both of the same religion, and such eventually proved to be the case. But, again, there was no chance to find out who she was."

"For by this time, you understand, I was in love. That sort of thing—real love, you know—doesn't grow. It happens. It is mature the moment it is born, and never grows

old. So I was in heaven then, for the first time in my life—in a heaven that contained but one angel, and I caught only fleeting visions of her. But, I tell you, it did me good. I developed more in the next month, while I was ransacking the town for another sight of that girl, than I had in the previous ten years. It made a man of me. I had been a happy-go-lucky boy. This made a serious man of me. I was filled with ambition. I saw an object in life, and at the same time the object of life."

"And you finally met her?" she broke in, with a queer little apology for a laugh. It is hard to laugh when your heart is breaking, but it is sometimes quite necessary—absolutely necessary often when you are a high contracting party to a marriage *de convenance*.

"Love will find a way," he quoted.

"And then?" she asked.

"Then," he replied, "I lived in the paradise of her presence when I had the opportunity, which was not often, for her family is an exclusive one—and conservative. And, when I had not the opportunity, I lived in the memory of her."

"And did she—did she reciprocate—your——"

"That I could never tell," he answered, simply. "You see, she was neither a milkmaid nor a shopgirl. So I could not meet her evenings 'Coming thro' the rye,' nor at the next corner above the shop on the way home after work. Therefore, I could not approach the matter in the usual way, with sheep's-eyes and pretty speeches."

That was cruel of him, she thought. But she could not believe he intended to be so. He was a gentleman, she felt sure, and he would not say anything deliberately to wound her. He simply did not understand. He regarded her quite impersonally, as one does a husband or wife always, in an affair *de convenance*.

"But you proceeded further?" she urged.

"Of course I did," he answered. "I am not the kind of a man to give up till the last position is carried or the last

blow is struck. I would never give up till I got my *coup de grace*."

She knew that. That was one of the things that had made him so attractive to her.

"I went right on," he continued, "desperately but logically, step by step. I told my father, and got his approval. He communicated with her father and mother, and got their approval. I wanted to remove every possible obstacle. It was the one love of my life. I knew that another like it would never come to me. It was all important——"

"But why didn't you tell her, and ask?" she burst in.

"I am telling her; I am asking her—don't you understand? You won't let me tell you her name, but I can make it plain to you. You are the girl." He was standing now with outstretched arms, and a glowing eagerness on his strong, handsome face.

She staggered to her feet—and toward him.

"Oh, I am so happy!" she exclaimed, and tears of joy ran down her blushing, smiling cheeks.

And the proceedings that he inaugurated upon perceiving them were entirely different from those that are customary in a proposal *de convenance*; to none of which did she make objection, or view the matter sensibly, or suggest acting with due decorum, or with more regard to the proprieties or even with reference to the ethics of conventionality.

From all of which we are warranted in concluding, as she did that night while she was trying to get asleep, and yet grudging the time stolen from happiness that she must sleep, that, no matter how high nor how strong aristocratic society may build its ramparts, it cannot keep out love.



A PERFUME MEMORY

A BUNCH of blossoms came to me to-day,
 And as I bent my face above the bloom,
 The walls about me shadowed and my room
 Grew dim and faded silently away
 Before the magic of one odorous spray.
 O strange, familiar perfume of a flower
 Which I had never seen until that hour!
 O wondrous memory which sleeping lay,
 Deep in my soul, till wakened by the call
 Of that one whiff of sweetness; for I saw
 A fair old house, a somber, twilight hall,
 A garden riotous, where sweet will was law,—
 Where once I must have wandered long ago,—
 I, who, bound here, of cities only know!

VENITA SEIBERT.

L'ESCALIER À DROITE

Par H. du Plessac

A PRÈS avoir régularisé avec un soin extrême les deux pointes de la cravate blanche de son fils, donné d'un coup de main, un pli élégant à son habit et relevé d'un doigt léger, une boucle égarée de sa chevelure, Mme. Cantosset considéra avec l'admiration due à une œuvre aussi parfaite, Lucien Cantosset, son enfant unique et chéri.

Il est certain que Lucien Cantosset n'était pas mal du tout. Sans doute Adonis était mieux, mais comme il n'est pas donné à toutes les jeunes filles d'épouser Adonis, beaucoup certainement se seraient avec plaisir contentées de Lucien comme mari.

— Maintenant, mon chéri, dit la mère, va de l'avant ! surtout quitte ton air renfrogné et maussade. Il y va de ton avenir. Tu arriveras, tu salueras la maîtresse de la maison, cette excellente Mme. Désormeaux qui ne te connaît pas et cependant s'occupe de ton bonheur. Tu lui diras : "Madame, ma mère est un peu souffrante c'est pour cela qu'elle ne m'a pas accompagné." Retiens bien ces paroles, c'est la phrase convenue. Aussitôt Mme. Désormeaux te présentera à Mlle. Durand, une perle, entends-tu, une perle ! Des cheveux blonds, des yeux bleus, un peu forte peut-être, mais cela lui passera ; toutes les qualités morales, et deux cent mille francs de dot ! Quand tu auras vu et apprécié Mlle. Estelle Durand, si elle te plaît, tout ira sur des roulettes, car je sais que ses parents désirent ce mariage. Courage donc et en route ! Boulevard Saint-Germain 192. Au second, Mme. Désormeaux. Tu verras d'ailleurs bien où il y a un bal dans la maison.

Lucien arriva non sans quelque émotion, à l'adresse donnée. Une longue

file de voitures s'étendait des deux côtés de la vaste porte cochère grande ouverte. Le second étage tout entier, — douze fenêtres — était brillamment illuminé.

— Peste ! se dit le jeune homme, quelle enfilade de salons ! Décidément, je vais dans une société sérieuse, il s'agit de bien se tenir.

Et, tirant ses manchettes d'un air conquérant il entra sous le porche sans rien demander. C'était d'ailleurs d'autant moins utile que toute une famille, en costume de gala, marchait devant lui. Elle prit l'escalier de droite, rempli de fleurs et de lumières ; il fit comme elle, non sans remarquer toutefois qu'un autre escalier à gauche offrait le même luxe resplendissant.

— Deux entrées, se dit-il, c'est rudement chic !

Tête haute, le jarret tendu, le claque sous le bras, il entra au salon. Avisant une dame très entourée qui donnait la main à droite et à gauche, il supposa que c'était la maîtresse de la maison et alla s'incliner respectueusement devant elle. Elle le regarda un instant et dit :

— Ah ! c'est vous monsieur, qui venez pour...

— Précisément, madame, interrompit Lucien en scandant ses mots, ma mère est un peu souffrante, c'est pour cela qu'elle ne m'a pas accompagné.

— Oh ! pauvre femme ! Combien je regrette ! murmura la maîtresse de maison d'un air parfaitement indifférent.

Et elle ajouta un peu pincée :

— Soit dit sans reproche, je vous espérais un peu plus tôt. Enfin, venez vite que je vous présente à Mlle. Durand. Elle vous attend avec une impatience !

— Diable, pensa Lucien. Voilà une

jeune personne bien pressée d'avoir le plaisir de faire ma connaissance.

Suivant la maîtresse de la maison, il arriva près d'une belle jeune fille qui paraissait recevoir avec modestie de nombreux compliments.

— Voilà notre jeune homme ! dit l'amphitryon en désignant Lucien qui trouva cette présentation un peu cavalière.

— Ah ! Monsieur, exclama Mlle. Durand, vous vous faites bien désirer ! Et au grand étonnement du jeune homme, elle lui tendit la main et la lui serra en camarade.

Lucien fut ébloui. Mlle. Durand outre qu'elle était fort jolie, avait un charme incomparable. Il pensa seulement :

— Qu'est-ce que m'a donc dit maman ? Elle n'a pas les yeux bleus, ils sont verts comme la mer. Ses cheveux ne sont pas blonds, mais châains ; elle n'est pas forte, c'est une sylphide. Mais peu importe ! Elle est délicieuse comme elle est.

— Voudriez-vous m'accorder la première valse, Mademoiselle ? fit-il.

— Oh ! je vous remercie, Monsieur, répondit la charmante enfant. Mais vous savez bien que nous ne pouvons pas danser, ni l'un ni l'autre, nous avons autre chose à faire.

Lucien ouvrait des yeux ébahis, ne comprenant pas du tout. Même il trouvait que Mlle. Durand avait beaucoup d'aplomb. Sans façon elle lui prit le bras et l'emmena vers le piano.

— Allons, à l'ouvrage, dit-elle gaiement. Commençons-nous par le *Beau Danube bleu* à quatre mains ?

Lucien était de plus en plus ahuri. Mais comme il avait un assez joli talent d'amateur et qu'en somme il n'y a rien de particulièrement désagréable à jouer du piano aux côtés d'une aussi gracieuse personne que Mlle. Durand, il attaqua le *Beau Danube bleu* avec entrain.

Après la valse ce fut un quadrille que Mlle. Durand lui demanda de jouer seul pendant qu'elle se reposerait. Puis elle joua à son tour le menuet de Mozart, en le priant de lui tourner les pages. Ensuite ils passèrent à la *Gauche de Marie-Antoinette* à quatre

mains ; et de polkas en quadrilles, de duchesses en mazurkas, de morceaux joués seuls en morceaux joués à deux, il y avait quatre heures que Lucien était dans le salon et il n'avait pas encore quitté le piano.

Il ne s'en plaignait pas le moins du monde : car en même temps il ne quittait pas Mlle. Durand. Des qu'ils avaient fini de jouer, ils se mettaient à côté du piano dans un coin, où personne ne s'occupait d'eux et ils causaient, causaient. Lucien avait commencé par s'amuser de cette situation singulière et toujours inexpliquée, puis il l'avait trouvée de plus en plus agréable et, à la fin de la soirée, il était amoureux fou de sa compagne. Sans être fat, il reconnut qu'elle aussi de son côté le regardait sans aucune malveillance, et quand ils se séparèrent, ils échangèrent avec une longue pression de mains un au revoir, qui, comme leurs morceaux de tout à l'heure, était parfaitement d'accord.

En rentrant Lucien se précipita chez sa mère qui anxieuse, veillait en l'attendant.

— Elle a les cheveux châains ! s'écria-t-il. Elle a les yeux verts ! Elle s'appelle Marguerite et non Estelle ! Mais quelle qu'elle soit, elle est adorable, je l'adore et je te prie d'aller demander sa main.

S'il n'avait pas jeté les yeux sur la pendule qui marquait trois heures du matin il aurait ajouté : tout de suite.

Mme. Cantosset n'alla cependant, par convenance, que deux jours après chez Mme. Désormaux. Elle fut reçue assez fraîchement et, timide de son naturel, se perdit dans les phrases broussailleuses.

— Mon Dieu ! Madame, fit Mme. Désormaux avec quelque compassion, je comprends votre embarras et même je vous plains. Ces pauvres jeunes gens, on n'en fait pas ce qu'on veut. Ah ! je regrette bien que votre fils ne soit pas venu.

— Comment pas venu ! s'écria Mme. Cantosset. Mais il a passé toute la nuit à votre réception et est rentré enthousiaste de la personne que vous savez.

— Je regrette de vous ôter une illu-

sion, madame, mais je vous affirme que monsieur votre fils n'est pas paru dans mon salon. Mais puisque vous êtes si sûre qu'il est venu, il doit y avoir là quelque malentendu. Attendez donc! continua Mme. Cantosset en se frappant le front. Vous lui aviez bien donné mon adresse?

— Sans doute. Boulevard Saint-Germain 192, au second.

— L'escalier à gauche?

— Je n'ai pas désigné d'escalier. Je n'ai pas pensé que ce détail...

— Voilà l'affaire! fit Mme. Désormeaux, qui ne put s'empêcher de rire. J'ai une voisine, Mme. de Mautambert qui m'a joué le vilain tour de donner une soirée dansante, le soir même de mon bal. Nous sommes même brouillées à cause de cela... On va chez elle par l'escalier de droite et chez moi par l'escalier de gauche... Votre fils se sera trompé d'escalier! Il ne s'agit plus pour vous que de savoir quelle est cette jeune fille dont il est si enthousiaste. Car, pour ma gentille protégée, je ne vous cache pas qu'il est trop tard... Elle avait d'autres prétendants, qui ne se sont pas tous... un surtout... trompés d'escalier.

— Madame, dit Mme. Cantosset en se présentant chez Mme. de Mautambert, je suis la mère du jeune homme qui...

— Oh! que je suis confuse que vous vous soyez dérangée, interrompit Mme. de Mautambert... Mon mari devait justement passer chez vous aujourd'hui pour vous remettre... Mais je vais le chercher, puisque vous êtes ici...

— Vous avez quelque chose à me remettre?

— Naturellement, le cachet de votre fils comme pianiste. Charmant jeune

homme! Un doigté superbe! Une verve dans le jeu! Et d'une résistance à la fatigue!... Grâce à lui et à cette chère Mlle. Durand, ma soirée a été très réussie.

— Vous aviez une demoiselle Durand à votre bal?

— Marguerite Durand, la maîtresse de piano de ma petite fille, qui, avec votre fils, constituait mon orchestre... Ah! tous deux ont bien gagné leur cachet!

— Mon Dieu! Madame, fit Mme. Cantosset finissant par comprendre, mon fils a vingt mille francs de rente du chef de son père, il en aura autant du mien. Il n'a donc pas précisément besoin de gagner sa vie en faisant danser. Il y a un quiproquo évident. Mon fils est venu ou a cru venir au bal chez Mme. Désormeaux, dans le but d'être présenté à une demoiselle Estelle Durand.

— Et il est venu au bal chez Mme. de Mautambert, dit celle-ci, en éclatant de rire, où il a été présenté à Mlle. Marguerite Durand!

— Mais ce qu'il y a de pire c'est qu'il en est fou.

— Mon Dieu! Tenez-vous beaucoup à la fortune?

— Si tout le reste est honorable.

— Tout ce qu'il y a de plus honorable. Le père, ancien officier...

— Comme mon mari.

— Mort sans laisser de fortune. Marguerite donne des leçons pour élever son jeune frère. C'est une petite perfection sous tous les rapports. Qui sait? Le hasard est un si grand maître! Tenez Madame, venez donc tout simplement dîner demain sans façon chez moi. Marguerite y sera avec une tante qui lui sert de mère. Amenez votre fils bien entendu, et nous recauserons de cela, après une seconde entrevue. Seulement, cette fois, prenez bien l'escalier de droite.



PATRICE

By Chauncey C. Hotchkiss

Author of "Mistress Hetty," "Betsy Ross," Etc.

I.

PATRICE RILEY stood at the door of the shanty she called home, and, shading her eyes, looked east and up the well-marked trail leading to the State road, the only official thoroughfare from San Antonio to the mysterious "great Northwest."

The soul of a woman, the love and anxiety of a woman, were in her nineteen-year-old bosom, and dominated her as she stood like an arrow in the doorway.

Her dress was the poorest of the poor, the faded calico skirt, long outgrown, falling but little below her knee, and showing a limb and ankle turned to perfection. The dry air of the climate and the sun had failed to leatherize her complexion, or give her hair the hay-like color and crispness common to the native Texan. There was a vigor and freshness about her that defied climate, and, as she threw back a wealth of brown hair with a toss of her head and gathered her fine brows in a mute expression of disappointment, there was a petulant beauty about her in striking contrast to her dress and immediate surroundings.

She stepped into the open, that her vision might not be crossed by the clambering rose-vine that covered one side of the cabin and hung over the decaying porch, as if it would hide the loose boards of the structure. As she turned her look westward, she marked two horsemen coming across the then fenceless country, and, with surprised interest, she watched them until they were within a hundred yards; then, having a full appreciation of the conditions sur-

rounding her, she stepped into the house, and, taking a Winchester from its slings, returned to the door.

It was a lonely spot, with the indefinite boundaries of a poor squatter's ranch. The country spread away in a billowy softness of hill and hollow, the higher lands capped with a wealth of timber. The insistent green of mesquite grass, scattered live-oak and forest dominated all other color, though the sun glittered from a cloudless blue, and the land was strewn with the lush growth of flowers that marks the Texas summer. Through the gaps in the woods the girl could see, here and there, a "bunch" of cattle silhouetted against the skyline, but not a house was within her view. The late afternoon gulf wind hummed over the lovely prospect and scattered the spice of the coast as it passed; but beauty of landscape and fragrance of breeze were lost on the maiden as she watched the riders.

As they came up and reined in, one of them addressed her, with the easy familiarity of the time and place.

"Hullo, Pat, my gal!"

"Evenin', Mr. Sheriff."

"Where's Monkey?"

The girl stepped back into the shade of the doorway, and, though she answered the sheriff, her gaze was fixed on the officer's companion, a man of thirty years or more, who sat on a great, white horse. The maiden's eyes were wide with a mixture of curiosity and something akin to criticism, as she replied:

"Dad went down to San Anton' with a load of posts five days ago. I'll allow he'll be back at any time. I was looking for him now. He's late."

"Are you not afraid of being left

alone, my child?" asked the stranger, as he bent down, with a look of open admiration in his fine eyes.

"No, I ain't, and I ain't alone—and I ain't your child!" was the quick retort. "I don't want nobody's protection! I reckon nobody'll rope me!"

The sheriff laughed.

"No patronizing here, Doc!" Then he turned to the girl. "I hope you're well fixed, Pat, an' Monkey will get home all right. I rode around this way just to tell ye——"

"What?"

"Bill Crystal's loose."

The pink that had come to the girl's cheek at the stranger's remark faded, and left her deadly pale, as she brought her hand to her bosom, and leaned forward.

"Bill—Crystal—loose!"

"Aye—pardoned; an' he's down to Boerne fillin' up. I heard him swear he'd cut the heart out of Monkey, just as his brother has got it in for the judge that sent 'em up."

The girl gasped.

"Well, what are you settin' there for? Can't you do somethin'? Ain't you an officer?"

"What can I do, Pat? Chris is still jugged, an' Bill ain't done nothin' but shoot off his mouth. I can't yank a man for talkin', an', besides, this is my last day in office. I've resigned, an' am goin' North to live." He laughed again. "I don't know if anything'll happen to Monkey, or if Bill is only blowin', but I just thought I'd put you an' Monkey up to him, so you won't have the claim jumped without warnin'. Where's Bob?"

"Inside," said the girl. "I ain't afraid for Bob—I ain't afraid for myself; but, if Bill should meet dad——"

Something seemed to catch in her throat, and her eyes melted in the tears that welled up but did not overflow. There was no response, and in a moment she continued: "Bob is all right—but you know Bob, an' you know dad. I wish I could be a man for about a week!"

She dashed the back of her hand across her wet eyes with an impetuous

motion, and at that moment there came from within the house a person at the sight of whom the man on the white horse showed undisguised astonishment.

He was a youth, and so startlingly like the girl that the stranger uttered an exclamation. Save for his dress and his shortened hair, the newcomer appeared the exact counterpart of the maiden by whose side he stopped. The two were evidently brother and sister, and twins at that, for in detail of feature and coloring they were as alike as two daisies. But in the youth there was an indefinable something lacking. As he greeted the sheriff, there seemed to be an air of timidity or bashfulness more in keeping with the nature of a woman than a man, and the light breath of femininity clung to him, and was suggested in every movement. Yet there was nothing indicating a lack of physical strength. As he leaned against the doorpost he appeared to be under the influence of deep mental retrospection, and, after his brief "Good-evenin'," kept his eyes dreamily fixed on the girl. It was evident he had heard nothing of the conversation, for he made no reference to it, nor did he appear in the least interested.

The sheriff made no further allusion to his errand, and, as if he had finished doing what he perhaps considered a disagreeable duty, abruptly turned his horse and looked at the westering sun.

"Well, Doc, we can't help matters. It's fifteen miles to Boerne, an' it'll be black dark afore we make it. Let's be off. My dooty to Monkey, Pat. I guess he'll keep his eyes open. Come on, Doc."

The man addressed was so lost in contemplation of the two in the doorway that his companion had crossed the low creek that ran past the rear of the shanty ere he appeared to gather his wits together. He seemed about to speak; but, instead of doing so, lifted his hat, with an instinct born of his education, and, bowing, shook his horse into motion and joined the officer.

The boy turned to his sister.

"That's the Yankee doctor down to Boerne fer his health. Reg'lar tenderfoot. Looks like he thought a heap of

himself. Don't act like he knew much, either."

The girl looked after the well-proportioned figure, as the stranger sped up the hill. "I don't know," she said, half aloud; then she put her mouth to her brother's ear, and raised her voice: "I wish dad would come," she cried. "Did he say he would go through Boerne either way?"

"Reckon he will; but he oughter be this side by now," answered the youth, in the monotonous cadence of the very deaf. The girl made no answer, but, with a wistful glance after the retreating horseman, turned into the house.

The doctor reined in as he reached the sheriff's side.

"Who are they?" he asked, abruptly.

"Monkey Riley's gal an' boy—only they ain't. Ever seen Monkey?"

"No."

"Regular ape-faced Mick; a pore, no-count squatter, without a cent outside what he gets haulin' cedar posts to San Antony—an' that's mighty little. An undersized, meek-spirited runt; that's what he is. Wuthless cuss!"

"Tough?"

"Tough? No. He hain't got no sand."

"Are those his children?"

"No. Ye see, when Monkey—we call him Monkey from his mug—when Monkey came to this section, sixteen or eighteen years ago, he started to look fer the lost San Saba mine—same as some fools are doin' now. He was a sure-enough tenderfoot them days, an' 'twan't long before he got muddled on the llanos, an' went clear out o' reckonin'—clean lost an' most crazy. One sundown he hit onto a wagon trail when he was nigh desprit, an' was follerin' it up when he came across them two children, settin' between the wheel tracks. They were both half-starved, an' the boy was blubberin' and nussin' on his sister's thumb. They couldn't ha' been more'n two years old. 'Cordin' to Monkey, he almost went daft from the joy o' findin' a human in that frightful waste, an' he feeds them an' packs them onto his horse. All he could get was from the gal, an' all she could say was: 'I's Pa-

trice; him's Blob'—Bob, she meant. Well, Monkey hadn't gone more'n two sights an' a yelp further—perhaps eight miles—when he comes onto a prairie schooner that had made the track. It was in ashes, Doc, an' among them ashes Monkey found the bodies of two men an' a woman—scalps clean gone an' the ground covered with empty cartridge-shells. They had made a fight for it. That settled Monkey. He'd heard about Apaches, an' didn't want to know any more. He lost interest in the San Saba all of a sudden; his duty looked plain, an' he drew a bee-line fer the East.

"Lord knows how them children got on the track so far away—nobody but the Lord ever will know. Funny, wa'n't it? Boerne was the first place he struck after that, an' he settled down, took up a piece, an' went to nussin' them babies. He act'ally told me that God had showed them at him, an' he wa'n't goin' to kick against His doin's. Curious cuss!"

"And you call him worthless?" asked the doctor.

"Well, no—not wuthless. He did good by them. The boy ain't got no spirit—not a bit—never drinks, nor nothin'—only likes to hang around the hotel an' watch people talk. He's deafer'n a post; never says anything; just tolerated; that's all; might as well be a chair—or a yaller dog. Pat ought to have been the man. She's brighter'n a milled dollar. Monkey broke himself buyin' books—regular schoolbooks—for her; an' it's a fact that, somehow, she's grown up clean—like a lily out o' the mud. She's got the spunk o' the outfit, an' she just dotes on Monkey an' the boy. She's a good gal. I don't think she was ever in Boerne in her life, nor ten miles from the shack since she was a kid; but she knows a heap about things—between me an' you, a heap more'n I do."

The doctor made no immediate return to this, being seemingly lost in thought, but later, as the two were walking their horses up a slope, he said:

"And what about Crystal?"

"Ever seen him?" asked the sheriff.

"No."

"Well, I'll bet you will know enough of him if you stay here. The trouble between him an' Monkey is about the matter of the killin' of a man—a stranger—shootin' him in the back. Monkey was the only witness. Bill would ha' plugged him, too, just to keep him quiet—he's equal to it—only Monkey is so meek-like that Bill thought he daren't open his mouth. But he did, an' Bill's got it in for him, that's all. Bill's popular with the boys. He's a great coward, really; but he's free with liquor, an' when he's full he's equal to 'most anything. If there's goin' to be trouble, I ain't sorry to be out of it—an' I ain't sorry I put Monkey on guard, either."

Again silence fell between the men, the doctor making no comment, though the glance he flashed at his companion was not complimentary in its scornful expression, and was not seen by the other, for the sudden gloom that follows the Texas sunset was over the land.

II.

While the two thus made their way toward the distant settlement, the girl went about her simple duties with a heart like lead. An unfulfilled prophecy seemed to hang over her, quenching her natural lightness of spirits and causing her steps to drag, as though from physical exhaustion. For a time the boy looked at her dreamily as she moved about the room; then he seated himself on the doorsill, his face toward the trail, his eyes fixed on the distance.

The blackness and silence of the moonless night fell together. As though each was in fear of what the other would say, neither brother nor sister broke the spell that appeared to bind them. It was nearly ten by the rude clock that sood on the rude shelf when the maiden heard the noise of coming wheels.

The boy suddenly disappeared. There was something in the character of the well-known sound that caused the girl to catch her breath, stand still, and, with her hand pressed to her bosom,

listen intently. Her foster-father never came dragging home in that fashion. With trembling hands, she lighted the well-guttered candle, and, holding it above her head, stepped to the door just as the vehicle stopped before it. The youth stood by the tailboard, motionless, his hands outstretched in a gesture of mute horror. The girl hurried out. The seat of the wagon was vacant, but on the bottom of the crazy structure, with his ape-like face upturned to the velvet sky, Monkey Riley lay, dead, a bullet-hole in his forehead.

With a cry like that of a stricken wild animal, the girl pushed her brother aside and leaped in beside the prostrate man. Taking the homely head on her lap, she kissed it, and talked to it, throwing over it the wealth of her long hair, as though to hide it from all but herself. In an ecstasy of grief, she rocked her body to and fro, as she petted the inanimate form, but not a word of either wonder or threat fell from her lips. When, finally, she had calmed herself, she was as white as the dead man, her beautiful eyes were like stones, and she looked about her, as though the land was strange. The boy was weeping like an abused child.

This tragedy created but little stir in the settlement. Violence was too common an occurrence to arouse the communal blood. The mystery of Monkey Riley's murder was a passing wonder, and, except by a few, the matter was forgotten in less than the proverbial nine days. If there were guesses at the cause of the palpable outrage, such guesses remained unexpressed in public; it was courting a similar death to accuse a man, rightly or wrongly. There was certainly no proof against any one, and twenty-five years ago the criminal laws of Texas were unadministered, save when those in high places were struck, or great commercial interests endangered, or the offense was open and flagrant.

Strange as it may appear in these days, in the case of Monkey Riley nothing was done. He had not been a popular character, or one who would be missed from the community, and his

poverty had been too absolute for his memory to command respect. Of much more general interest than the murder of the obscure Irishman was the news that the recently liberated convict, Mr. William Crystal, had suddenly disappeared.

To the doctor, the information of the death of Riley came with peculiar force, though, why it did so, was a puzzle even to himself. He correctly interpreted the general silence and lack of interest, and, being powerless, shrewdly held his tongue, though at the first opportunity he rode out to the ranch, for the sole purpose (he explained to himself) of offering sympathy and help to the stricken family.

The doctor was not a man given to self-deception. He frankly admitted that the story of the children interested him as things of more importance had failed to do, and he was thankful for the fact that it had interested him at all. Having been brought low through the stunning shock of the loss of his father, mother and sister by the sinking of an ocean steamship, he had gone South as much to escape from maddening and persistent condolences as to get into new scenes and regain his health.

For him the flavor of life had gone. Great events, and even self-interest, failed to arouse him, and the only thing that had saved the man from a deadly and unnatural *ennui* which might have ended in suicide was the practice of his profession—a practice carried on through sheer scientific enthusiasm alone, he being far beyond the need of pecuniary reward. His sight of the girl—a unique figure, even in that unique country—had filled his dead curiosity, and the sheriff's subsequent tale roused his lethargic interest.

When the news of the murder came to him, he was both impressed and mildly elated at the fact that within him there woke a sense that, somehow, he was closely connected with the event. It was a spark of interest that, as interest, was so new and so entirely refreshing that he had hopes for himself. It appeared to him that the struggle he had made—a struggle to lift himself

above the crushing weight of a sorrow that had paralyzed mental reaction—was beginning to bear fruit, and upon this he hung a hope which, as hope, was still further a stimulus. Therefore, to him the so-called "incident" of the shooting of the poor squatter held an interest beyond its mere fact; and it was with a definite feeling of mildly rising spirits that he rode out to the ranch. It had been more than a week since the tragedy.

He found the girl alone. Save for a sweet seriousness in her face, he marked no change in her appearance. There was about her a natural courtesy that astonished him, inasmuch as he had expected the curtness experienced at their previous meeting. Had the maiden been born and bred to the purple, she could not have held herself with more grace and dignity than when, after hearing his words of condolence, she looked at him steadily, as though weighing his sincerity, then invited him into the house, and gave him the details of the tragedy, so far as she knew them. Not a word did she drop concerning the possible murderer, nor did she threaten, or complain of the laxity of the law which had failed to probe the outrage. Her unexpected calmness, her entire lack of embarrassment, save for the trifle of color that came to her face, and which impressed the man as apologetic for the poverty of her dress and the rude interior of the house, attracted him out of proportion to the circumstances. Her mode of expressing herself was a shock to his fastidious and educated ear; but, so little did it lower her tone or his suddenly increased respect for her, that, ere they had talked five minutes, the doctor felt how utterly impossible it would be for him, a stranger, to offer her pecuniary help without insulting her. His most delicately put questions concerning her needs were met with a little look of wonder, and turned aside in a manner that showed him she did not consider the affair as his.

"Have you no friends?" finally asked the doctor, feeling that he was not making much headway.

She was sitting on a stool by the

puncheon-table, her small feet crossed, her fingers laced together. She smiled, a trifle wearily, and there was a weariness in her voice, as she answered:

"Friends? None, I reckon. Lots of folks has been here, an' they look around an' allow they're sorry for dad." Her blue eyes filled with tears. "That's all. I reckon they just thank God they're better off'n me an' Bob. Dad don't need pity—now. He didn't get it when he wanted it, an' I don't want it, an' I don't want friends. You don't understand what I mean, an' I can't tell." She threw back her heavy hair, with a quick and graceful toss of her head. "I—I'm afraid that if I had 'em, they'd go back on me when I needed 'em most, an' that would hurt worse than not havin' 'em at all. I don't want to feel like Jesus felt when Peter went back on Him."

The doctor was a little startled, and somewhat impressed. He arose to go, and held out his hand.

"Nevertheless, Miss Patrice, I would be your friend—so far as you will allow me," he said, and his feeling was manifested in both voice and manner.

The girl was touched. Her eyes were still wet, as she put her hand in his, but she shook her head doubtfully as she answered:

"No, sir. You're different from anybody I've ever seen, but you had better not tell me that. You don't know me—much, an' I don't want to drag you down."

"I fail to understand."

She smiled through her tears.

"Well, you won't fail—not always. Good-evenin'."

There had been no sprightliness to the interview—nothing attractive throughout, save the girl's beauty of face and figure, a beauty filling the man's eye. Yet he found, for the nonce, he had completely forgotten himself, and that, too, for the space of a full half-hour.

A few days later he went to the ranch again, attracted by he knew not what, though he pretended he was but passing on his way homeward from a distant patient. The maiden saw him coming, and ran into the house. When, after a

short delay, she presented herself before him, she was clad in a woollen dress that fell to her feet, covering them, and her brown hair was coiled in a loose knot on top of her head. About her round throat was a cheap white ruffle, and, in lieu of a brooch, a pink rose from the vine lay pinned on her bosom.

If admiration for physical beauty ever shone from a man's eyes, it did from the doctor's; but the conversation was no more satisfactory to him than it had been before, and when the young physician rode homeward he carried with him a sense of disappointment and rebellion against an indefinable something to which he had hitherto been an utter stranger.

III.

Again and again he went to her, cursing his own folly even while explaining to himself that he was only making an interesting study of a most anomalous character. It was not long ere he confessed that, notwithstanding his ideas of individual superiority, the girl was his equal in all but education and wealth; that she was a neglected exotic; and, also, there was forced on him the evident fact that such refinement of feature, such natural dignity and grace of poise and movement could not have originated in common stock, or be the outcome of her uncouth social surroundings. This started him looking for a clue to the identity of her parents, but the trail soon led him up against the dead wall of ignorance. There was not a scrap of evidence on which to base a first step.

As for himself, he seemed to have risen from the dead. Life's flavor had come back to him, and brought a sweetness it never held before—a sweetness tempered with bitterness. For he was forever at war with the unwritten social law of the fitness of things. He was perfectly frank with himself at last. By the time the Texas summer had waned—a summer that brought but little change to the land—he acknowledged that from the tiny seed of desire had sprung the small shoot of affection, and

this had grown from an insignificant blade to a plant too mighty to uproot, and whose fruit he dared not attempt to pluck. He had fallen madly in love with a woman who, though mentally and physically his equal, was socially in the depths, and far beneath him. He was a moral coward, and he knew it.

But he was not the man to permit himself to be forever torn by such an internal conflict. Betwixt the passion that had grown in him, and now dominated all else, and a sense of the social degradation from which he must take the girl, if he wished to possess her, he was in a state of continual unrest that at last became unbearable. He passed the winter in this state, each day being worse than the one before, and the early spring found him desperate. Then there came a time when, putting aside doubts and fears, and with a feeling of emancipation from social bondage, the doctor mounted his horse and started for the ranch. He had struggled and won.

It was a glorious day—a day when men look abroad and thank God they are living, so gracious was the air, so entrancing the prospect of the land. As the doctor rode by the tavern in Boerne, he saw Bob Riley sitting on the steps, in the listless attitude which was so characteristic. A few chronic loungers were gathered on the broad piazza, in boisterous confab, but the boy sat in utter neglect. His likeness to his sister was so startling that, in his present mood, the doctor's heart leaped. To what a new world would he lift the unfortunate when he had the right! He was about to ride over and speak to him, when he was himself accosted by a Mexican, who wished his immediate services, and he turned back with his patient—a fateful hour, as, had he gone his intended way, this tale would scarce be worth its telling.

As the doctor went in at his own door, Bob Riley got to his feet, mounted the miserable brute he called a horse, and started homeward, moving in a manner that showed an entire lack of interest in life.

A little later Patrice was standing on the bank of the run in the rear of her

house, filling the pail she had carried to the brook. She drew herself up and let her gaze rove over the bit of plowed ground that stood for the garden, then looked up the trail, with an expression of disappointed expectancy in her eyes. The country about was charming, but not more so than the face of the girl. Her petulant beauty had gone, and in its place was a settled melancholy that had refined her features, though it had not weakened or marred them. Instead of the defiant compression of the lips, there was a slight droop to the corners of her small mouth, and her sweet eyes held a far-off, yearning look that is, in a woman, of more potency than the flash of mere vivacity. As she bent to lift the full pail, she became aware of the presence of a man, who had stepped from the tangle of chaparral beyond the brook, and who now stood with but the little stream between them.

He was a burly individual of about fifty, obese in figure, and his coarse face was rendered coarser by the gray stubble of a beard three days old; but there was nothing forbidding in the smile he gave the girl when he saw he was recognized. He was dressed much the same as the cowboy of the period, save that his immense hat of heavy, white felt was bespangled and besilvered after the fashion of the Mexican. Over his arm was thrown the bridle of the horse he had led through the thicket, and plainly in evidence was the everlasting Winchester hanging in its case on the saddle. A heavy quirt, or whip, hung by its lash, which was wound around the pommel. The person of the man appeared to be unarmed.

As Patrice caught sight of the ponderous figure that halted as she turned about, the pail dropped from her lax fingers; then she stiffened, and her eyes widened.

"Bill Crystal!"

"Aye, Pat; who did ye think it was?" he said, dropping the bridle and striding across the water. There was no answer, and, approaching the girl, the man continued: "I bin watchin' ye dream fer ten minutes. Ye be prettier'n a picter—prettier'n ever. I kem up to——"

"Stay back! Stay away from me!" The girl recoiled a pace.

"By G—d! Ye be sassier'n ever, too! I thought ye'd be different," he returned, standing where her words had halted him.

"What do you want?" asked the girl, who seemed to grow taller as she stood still and measured the fellow with an eye from which all softness had disappeared.

"Want? Why, I reckon I want to see you. I heard as how Monkey was dead, an—"

"You knew he was dead!" broke in the maiden.

Something like confusion flashed over the face of the man, and his small eyes sent out a spark, as he said:

"I knew? I been away! How did I know?"

"Because you shot him, you skunk!" replied the girl, turning as pale as death.

"By God! It's good fer you you're only Pat Riley, an' not a man!" returned Crystal, lowering his voice, though not disguising the threat in it. "Who told ye I shot him?"

"Who needed to tell me, you coward? I know it! Who else cared for dad—loved him or hated him—cept me an' Bob an' you? Who else but you said he'd fix him? Who else wanted to fix him?"

She looked down on him, magnificent in her hot anger. The color that had returned and glowed on her cheeks spoke of the depth of her feeling.

"That ain't no proof," was the somewhat easy return of the man, as he forced a laugh—a laugh of apparent relief. "I allow I didn't have no love for Monkey. He went back on me. I don't see why ye cut up so about him. Wot sort of a father was he to you two kids, a-keepin' ye in this hide-out? He wa'n't yer real paw, anyhow. I come to do the right thing by ye, if ye'll let me. I'll make a ledgy of ye. I'll fix ye so's to knock out all the wimmen around these parts—knock 'em puffedly silly! Come, I'm on the square now, anyhow. Don't get cantankerous till ye hear me through, Pat."

"Go on."

"When I was jugged, my woman skipped off with a greaser an' ran down Mexico way. Then I thought o' you; I allus thought a mighty lot o' you, Pat. I got a pot o' money all at once, an' now I want a proper figgerhead fer my place. Ye'll never mount to nothin' here. It's the best chance ye'll ever have. I'll treat the boy white, an' ye can swing the whole ranch."

"You mean you'll marry me?"

Had the man possessed the least discernment, he would have seen danger in the slightly quivering body of the girl.

"Wall, I don't know as I mind, if ye insist; but I'm afraid it would be no go—with the woman a-livin'. Wot's the difference? Wot do ye say?"

For an answer, the girl looked about her in wild hopelessness, the red of her cheek again giving way to the pallor of intense passion. Her hands clinched and unclined, and, as her eyes caught sight of Crystal's horse, which had fallen to cropping the mesquite across the creek, she turned, and, with a bound, cleared the narrow run and was at the animal's side. With a quick movement, she drew the rifle from its case on the saddle, and threw up the hammer.

"What do I say?" she vociferated, her ringing voice sounding like a clashing bell. "I say I would welcome hell sooner than a touch of your finger, you cur! Oh, you hound! An' I won't say no more. Get onto this horse, an' if you're not out o' shot in half a minute I'll put a bullet through you, so help me God! You loafer—you coward!"

The man stood for a moment too astonished to move, then his broad face turned red. Like one accustomed to the situation, he threw his hand to his hip, but the pistol he had considered as unnecessary in his love-making pilgrimage was not in its place. As quick as a flash, the girl covered the great figure with the rifle, and, as the man marked her cold eye glance along the barrel, his pudgy hands went aloft.

"Hold on, Pat! Ye have the drop on me! I'll go, all right; but it'll be a sorry day fer you! A nice return for a fair offer nine gals out o' ten would jump at! I know wot's the matter. I

heard. It's that damned doctor! Put down that iron—I ain't got a gun." He coupled a vile epithet with his words, and moved toward his horse, the girl's eye following him, as though she feared treachery. No further words passed until Crystal climbed into the saddle, his weight making the animal lurch as he hung in the stirrup. When settled, he cast a venomous look at the girl, as he said:

"I'll see his water is dammed fer him, the sneakin' tenderfoot!" Then he moved off on a walk, which, as quickly as hurt pride would allow, gave place to a canter. And so he went up the trail.

The girl stood like a statue, watching him. She saw him top the brow of the hill, and suddenly rein in, blocking the passage of another horseman who appeared, and whom she instantly recognized as her brother. The two were plainly silhouetted against the pale blue of the lifted horizon. For a moment they seemed to be holding a colloquy, then the big man bent quickly toward the other and struck at him. The girl could see the thin line of the heavy quirt handle as it descended on the boy; she could see the arm thrown out to avert the blow. The next instant her brother's saddle was empty, and Crystal had disappeared over the crest of the upland.

IV.

When, an hour later, the doctor reached the ranch, he found the youth moaning on his bed, a deep gash in his scalp and a terrible contusion on the arm that had been the ward which had saved his life. That no bones had been broken appeared miraculous, but the young man was low through fright and shock. If the attack had failed to kill, it was not through lack of purpose.

The girl moved about like a graven image. Her face was set in dumb agony, but there was no outburst, no denunciation; and the doctor received but a bare recital of the facts as she had seen them. Of Crystal's call and interview with herself she dropped no hint.

She appeared to be half-dazed, though perfectly calm.

With professional instinct, the physician saw his duty, and did it gently and quietly. There was a great tide of indignation swelling within him as he worked over the boy—an indignation mingling with a greater pity for the woman, and a something else that showed him his power of repression had reached its limit. He must dare the world—his world; and, if he had come hither with the hope to temporize still further, he now saw how impossible it would be. He must take or leave.

When, after quieting the youth, he drew the girl aside, he marked no lifting of the dumb protest in her face when he assured her the brother's hurts were superficial in themselves. They stood together on the little porch, the roses flinging themselves in the wind and scattering perfume. She looked at him steadfastly, as a woman looks into the eyes of a man she knows well, and she knew him well—now. She was perfectly impassive. He approached the subject surging within him by saying he would at once lodge a complaint against Crystal; but she stopped him, with a quick, impulsive motion that appeared to arouse her.

"No, no! Not you—not you! Didn't I tell you I wouldn't drag you down? You must not tell! If you did, you would have to——"

"Well?" he said, waiting for the final moment.

"You'd have to go. He er his pard would kill you if you didn't leave the place."

"Well, and if I did leave?"

She made no answer, save what he thought he read in her sudden paleness and quick upward look; then he rushed madly to his fate. Every consideration save that of love he flung to the winds. He would go if she would go. He would provide for her and for her brother. He would educate both; there was time—she was young. He would marry her now, then, or at any time. He prostrated himself in all but body. The passion and truth of the man flashed from his eyes; his words fell in

a hot torrent of promises and proposals interspersed with endearments that must have caused the girl exquisite joy, even while they cut her to the core. She waited without a word, without a look at him, then drew from the embrace in which he had caught her, and stepped away, her face so suddenly changed that he was startled.

"When a man talks that way, he must have an answer," she said, with a semi-defiant movement of her head, though her bosom heaved as though she needed breath, "and my answer is—no, not now!"

The doctor's heart contracted. He swayed a little. He had never doubted for an instant.

"Not now! Not now?"

"Not now."

"When?"

"I don't know. Perhaps never. Oh, for God's sake, go away! Can't you see you are killing me slowly? Don't come back here ever—till I say you may. I will speak when the time comes."

"Patrice! Patrice!" he exclaimed, leaping forward, as he saw the wonderful lovelight in her eyes—a light strong beyond hiding.

She twisted from his attempted embrace, and, with a cry, ran out of the room.

Like one partly stunned, the doctor stood for a space and looked at the door through which she had fled. He laid his hand on the rude table, as though needing its support; then, as though moving in his sleep, walked out, mounted his horse, and rode away.

It was six weeks before the boy was seen at the tavern again. Little attention was paid to the youth, although the sling in which he carried his left arm evoked a meed of minor curiosity. He was soon left untroubled, for, as a person harmless and of little force, he was of no interest, and appeared to hang around the piazza for the sole purpose of being near humanity. No one cared how he lived. He was wont to ride into town on his old horse, sometimes with a string of game, presumably brought down with the Winchester he had inher-

ited, the game being exchanged for a meal. Little could be gotten from him in the way of words, and the element hanging about the place treated him with plain contempt because of his moody and unsocial nature.

It might have been chance that made Crystal disappear again immediately after the assault. No one dared aver that anything but business was the cause of his sudden departure, but perhaps that gentleman thought that the local authorities might become interested in the matter if the boy died, and probe the animus of the act. At all events, it was now whispered that Crystal would be back shortly. None noticed that, when the youth heard the rumor, his fair face lost a shade of its color, his faultless mouth turned a trifle hard. The expected arrival was hailed with free expressions of joy by most of the characters making the tavern their headquarters, and on the great day of his looked-for advent there were a number of his kind assembled to receive him, lounging in tilted chairs on the broad piazza and out of reach of the blazing sun.

For it was a fiery day when at last Crystal drove up, in his dilapidated buggy, the ragged top of which seemed to curl in the fierce heat. The man's great body nearly covered the tattered cushion of the seat. The crowd rose *en masse* when he appeared—all save Riley's boy, who sat apart on the floor of the piazza, drawing through his fingers the silky ears of a hound that had walked up to him. His depression was extreme. As Crystal was hailed, he waved a fat hand to the waiting company, and reined in down the road to speak to the blacksmith, who had run from his shed, and in the commotion of expectancy no one noticed Riley's boy lift his eyes.

They did not see him lift his eyes, nor did they see the sudden pallor on his face. They only knew that, as they waited to welcome their popular companion, there came the report of a rifle from the end of the piazza, and Bill Crystal leaped to his feet with a forty-four caliber ball in his great abdomen. The boy was standing quite still, his

Winchester in his hand, smoke still oozing from its muzzle and smoke hanging over the youth's fair head.

The wounded man swayed on the floor of the buggy for an instant, then, with the roar of a bull, leaped from the vehicle and ran into the blacksmith's shop, where he fell on a heap of cinders, and, groveling like the coward he was, cursed, prayed, wept, and begged for the doctor.

For a moment no attention was paid to the boy. As the crowd left the piazza with a rush and surged through the broad door of the shop, the youth walked to his horse, mounted it and rode toward the river, the few who noticed his act not having the courage to thwart a man well armed and evidently desperate. He crossed the Sebola, pressing his horse through the ford, and so went into the lower town, and drew up in front of the house of the doctor.

That gentleman was in no enviable state of mind. For six weeks he appeared to have fallen back into his old state of lethargy, a fact that caused consternation in the broad bosom of his housekeeper. But the doctor was not lethargic. The old numbness was Elysium compared to the feeling now possessing him, but he was not one to wear his heart on his sleeve. The dead level of an *ennui* against which he had been wont to struggle did not trouble him now. He was alive, painfully alive, to the keenness of his agony. Hurt pride, fast falling hopes, desire unsatisfied, and suspense make a poor bed for any one. He dared not intrude on the woman who, he knew, loved him, yet sent him from her. He dared not leave the place, though he felt that his mission in Texas had about ended; yet he was impelled to fly from this galling sweetness, as he had once fled from the galling numbness of grief. He had disobeyed the girl in one thing, however. He would not let the brute who was about to return to Boerne go unpunished, and at that moment there sat in his study the new sheriff, to whom he had just finished retailing the facts relative to Riley's death and the subsequent assault on the boy. He was willing to brave the conse-

quences of this, and waited for the official's opinion in the matter. The opinion was not held back.

"If Bob Riley had any sand, he would kill that sucker. It is the best way to get rid of him. There ain't a jury on earth that knows the man but would acquit him with a jump. But I tell you, if it is just a trial for assault—for the murder can't be proved—you'd better make yourself scarce if you lug your name into it. I'll nip him when he comes, if you just say so; but, so long as he lives after that, your hide's not safe from a sudden ventilatin'. You'd better let summun else do the business."

The doctor looked at the man. He sat still a moment, running his fingers through his hair, then he said:

"You know that I can do nothing, not being the one aggrieved. You are an officer of the law. I give you your cue; act on it, if you dare—it's your business. The girl—the children are afraid; the man's a menace to society. Don't try to protect yourself by attempting to protect me. Use my name in any way you like."

The sheriff ejaculated the word "Hell!" as a preface to more; but he was interrupted by a light footfall, and in the open door of the shaded room, to all appearances, stood one of the subjects of their conversation. The officer, being in a distant corner, was not seen by the intruder, but the doctor sat where a shaft of light from the fiery sky came through the half-closed blind and fell on his white face. The figure glided into the room, and stopped before him.

"I've shot Bill Crystal! I had to! I did it to save me an' Bob an'—an' you!" There was a slight tremor to the voice, as it hesitated, and then broke out: "Will you have me now?"

Before either man could get to his feet, the Winchester fell to the floor, with a sharp clang, and was followed by the speaker, who pitched to the carpet, unconscious.

The sheriff stepped to the window, and threw wide the blind. The doctor stooped beside the fallen figure, then arose, trembling like a leaf.

"My God! It's Patrice!"

His companion looked down on the prostrate form, and chewed on the end of his cigar. He was not a man easily shaken.

"Well, I'm eternally cursed! She's cut the knot, an' the deal's up to me!" Then he went out.

It was an hour before the girl regained her senses, but, when she did, she found the doctor sitting by her side. One of her hands was imprisoned in his. As for him, there was no need for questions. He read through the history of the weeks, and now knew the mind of the girl as clearly as he knew his own. As she came to herself, she looked into his face a little wildly, then suddenly drew herself upright on the sofa, pulled away her hand, and tried to get to her feet. The doctor passed his arm about her.

"I—I remember now," she faltered. "I—I didn't mean to faint. Let me go."

"Where will you go, Patrice?" he asked. "Why would you go?"

She swung away from him, with a little of her old spirit.

"You—you ought to know. I—I said something when I came in here, an' you wouldn't answer me—you never answered me."

"My poor, brave darling! Did you need an answer—from me?" he said, and clasped her tightly.

Then she broke into a storm of sobs.

The trial of Patrice Riley for shooting and killing William Crystal is an old story in Texas. The result was an acquittal, and more—it was a clamorous justification, an indorsement of her act and spirit, the jury not considering it necessary to leave their seats. For a time the girl was the heroine of the country, the neglect in which she lived giving place to profuse offers tending to her future prosperity. But both she and her brother suddenly disappeared. As for the doctor, it is well known that he left Texas immediately after the trial. It is also well known that in a Northern seminary there was a young lady of striking beauty and great spirit whom he married on the very day of her graduation.



STEADFASTNESS

REGARD the common wayside weeds;
 How to the boundless air
 They cast their hundred thousand seeds
 To drift, they know not where!
 Thrice happy he who from this reads
 That he should not despair,
 But day to day should sow his deeds,
 In hope that *one* shall bear.

EDWIN L. SABIN.

THE HEN-MINDED MAN

By Kate Masterson

A PERSON that signed himself, "A Mere Man," once wrote a book which he called, "The Domestic Blunders of Women." The name he chose to write under was the most subtle feature of his work. It was almost inspired. But he was much less than mere. He was hen-minded. And he was a perfect type.

In a cold, emotionless, almost legal manner he arraigned women at the bar of his splendid judiciary. The fact that most of the faults he accused the sex of were actual errors, necessarily frequent while women remain wives, daughters, sisters and sweethearts, instead of hired clerks, did not detract from the magnificent paltriness of his mental exudations. He descended even into the ash can in his search for material.

His book is a far more perfect likeness of a Hen-minded Man than a photograph could ever be. Between the petty lines one can read the story of an awful tragedy—that of the woman who may have lived under the same roof with him. Unless she had some saving sense of humor, there must have been many moments when she envied the independence of her laundry-woman.

Hen-mindedness is an attribute of which women generally are accused. Especially is the simple domestic type of woman, the mother of many babies, singled out as a specimen of limited mentality. Her accusers lose sight of the fact that womanhood in itself is a sufficient attainment, while motherhood is a crown. The thought that goes up from the mind of a woman with a child upon her breast is greater than the grandest poem that was ever penned. It is far too beautiful to have been written.

Too much mind frequently unsexes

woman and makes her a Female. She becomes strong-minded, bifurcated, unafraid. Over-mentality takes the crimps out of her hair and puts them in her forehead. She evinces a tendency for queer gowns and bad hats. She has then become all that the Hen-minded Man would have a woman be. She is his perfect mate.

Only a few mentally endowed women are strong enough to conceal their knowledge of things and go in for chiffons. They have learned the part they were intended for. A home run on a schedule of time, of expense, of unalterable rules, hours, habits, becomes at once an institution, an establishment, an office, but it ceases to be a home. Women furnish the one thing needful to a true home—the spirit, the love, the kindness, the welcome of the stranger to the hearth. If women jotted these things down in account books all men would be bankrupt.

A man must have a mind. His sex is not a sufficient profession. His part in the scheme calls for the power to think, to reason, to plan, to work for both. The mother-bird hovers above the nest, the male swoops out into the atmosphere to feed them and to fight for them. A hen-minded male bird would sit in a branch and criticise the arrangement of the eggs.

The Hen-minded Man is the saddest of all spectacles. And more than that, while his position in society and business standing may be above reproach, he is really the most unmoral of men. He represents a perverted condition. Like Tomlinson, he hovers between worlds, too negatively good for heaven, too insufficiently bad for hell. The devil, with all his faults, is not hen-minded.

Hen-mindedness often remains unassertive until after marriage. Matrimony is a test—one of the big tests of life—calling for all good qualities in return for what it gives. The lack of certain manliness may lurk all unsuspected in the lover who has not assumed the responsibilities of husbandhood, just as womanliness may be wanting in the charming girl whose main ideas and ambitions in life are the sheen of her finger-nails and the luster of her hair.

Matrimony brings everything out, and calls on various virtues in the way of tolerance, kindness and, above all, love to combat the disclosures of character it brings. The right sort of man will have enough manliness to take upon himself the task of guidance. He knows that he is the stronger of the two, and strives to meet the new conditions.

But how about the Hen-minded Man? The Hen-minded Man in managing to win a woman—how he ever accomplishes it is a mystery—has reached his highest achievement. Retrogression sets in at once. He is content to rest on his oars. He realizes, and she learns to realize, that he has no power to rule, to guide or to direct. He is at his limit. He actually thinks that he can run his home and his wife as he runs his office and his clerks.

You will always find the woman that is clamoring about the superiority of her sex has never enjoyed any individual queenship over the hearts or minds of men. If she had, they would have convinced her long ago that the subject needed no defense from her lips. She would be serenely installed on her pedestal, with a few cushions at her back.

So the Hen-minded Man is as pitiable in his unconscious pathos as the speech-making female. He expresses so much more than he is aware of, that as a symbol he is far more eloquent than as a man. All who run may read the pages of his little book, but it is as lacking in interest as the leaves of the grocer's pass-book with which the Hen-minded Man has a strong affiliation.

For it is the close economist in regard to household expenditure that best presents the pure type of this class of

male. He has other forms of expression, it is true, but none so loud and tinkling as this. Whatever faults the over-generous man may have (and he is quite apt to be endowed with them), he is never mentally henny.

Women unused to the care of households are quite likely to be thoughtless as to money expenditure. They are likely to be, but, in nine cases out of ten, women have inborn economical tendencies. The woman spendthrift is the exception. Dress lures some women into extravagances, but the average woman will do far more with money in its relation to a home than a man can do.

The Hen-minded Man installed as the head of a family exchanges the dignity of the new honor that has been placed upon his brow for the career of house husbandry. He not only demands a strict accounting for all moneys, but he begins to peer into cupboards as if he had married a girl Bluebeard. He wants to know the price of chops. He audits the milk bill with an anxious eye. An extra cake of soap troubles him so that he makes it a topic of dinner-table discussion.

In his attitude toward his wife's personal expenditures he attains his highest degree—the cap and gown of his ground-scraping intelligence. A woman who is without pin money and who dislikes to ask for it will, through desperation, acquire her gloves, veils, hose and carfare through the medium of the household money. When the time comes that she must have a gown or a hat it marks a crisis in the life of the man with the Hen Mind.

He realizes that this tendency must be quelled. He holds off, questions, demands to know the price of things. He tells his wife that his hats never cost more than five dollars. He humiliates her to the position of a mendicant asking alms. The Hen-minded Man delights in this situation until the actual parting with the cash occurs. It is the nearest that he can ever get to the position his manhood should be worthy of—that of being looked up to, admired, loved, even worshiped, not for what he

gives grudgingly to the woman he has promised to care for, but for what he is—a Man!

A man may have all the virtues, but if he possesses this smallness in his providing for domestic expenditures he will be far more impossible than any other type of masculinity. Very bad men unfortunately gain the love of women who would die for them if need be. The Hen-minded Man never gains anything more than a friendly contempt, even from the mother of his children.

He who is best endowed with the world's goods is frequently most fearful lest the woeful extravagance of the cook is ruining him. It becomes a fixed idea with him that the leakage in the household accounts is the only thing worth his interest. He helps to fill boarding houses and family hotels.

His wife speedily learns that house-keeping becomes an inferno under such conditions, when explanations are demanded for every dollar that goes out. After her pretty home is broken up and she is settled in the second floor back of some boarding house, you call and find her with a calm-eyed defiance in her eye, in place of the old anxiety. At least she cannot now be called to account for the rise in the price of beef or the four extra bottles of cream on the bill, that have gone—God knows where!

The man with the poultryfied brain occurs in other phases of life, but he is never so difficult or so narrow as in this rôle of expert household accountant and penny-chaser. The finical well-dressed fellow, that worries over the pattern of his hose to such an extent that he loses sleep and writes to the newspapers, is very often possessed of a good heart, which rarely exists in the same body with the hen mind.

Sometimes he happens in editorial offices, where all matters to be approved by him must attain a certain standard of English, no matter how spineless or emasculated it may become in the process of threshing over. The ladies' tailor and milliner are apt to be charming chaps in manner and appearance, but they become peculiarly hen-minded in their view of life through constant

association with the subject of woman's dress.

Often they can buy and sell better than more manly men, but their minds, nevertheless, narrow to a point toward which the optic nerve converges in only one direction. You will meet the Hen-minded Man often at the afternoon receptions of women's clubs, where he drinks tea and talks poetry and art.

Frequently he has attainments in these directions, but his mental anæmia expresses itself in all his views. He lacks red blood.

The only way a woman can reason with a Hen-minded Man is to bully him or else make fun of him. To give in to him is to be lost. Thus is he unmoral. A woman forced to the wall will resort to deceit, to falsehood, to secret arrangements with tradesmen, to everything that is mean. She fights him on his own ground. Of course she wins. But the victory is a pitiable one, and she knows it.

The Hen-minded Man may be converted sometimes, if he be sufficiently in love, as Hen-minded Men love, not through blandishments and tears, but though the building up of some hearthstone Frankenstein which will prove to be more important than the household expenses. A clever woman can manage a Hen-minded Man easier than any other, but women are seldom clever when they love.

But something more important must dawn upon the horizon and shake up the corn-fed mind of the man. The fixed idea must be jarred rudely from its roost. A good attack of jealousy is a capital plan for a cure; a long absence sometimes does marvels: invalidism, either real or assumed, breaks the brain-lesion, from which feathers have begun to sprout, and transplants them to the shoulder blades. Above all, the appearance of a baby sometimes wakes the dormant intelligence from its downy trance, and missing bottles of milk are no longer questioned. In fact, this last remedy is perhaps the best. A baby always comes in the nature of a surprise, and an expensive one at that—to the Hen-minded Man!

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